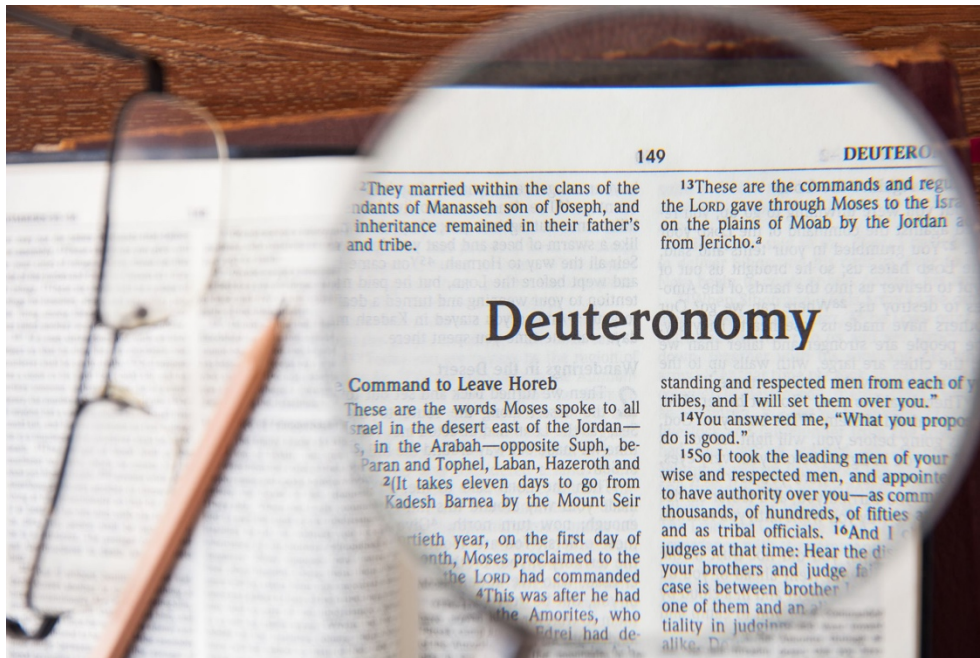


# THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

## GUARDING PURITY DEUTERONOMY 13, 14



T. M. and Susie Moore

*A Scriptorium Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

Guarding Purity: Deuteronomy 13, 14  
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## Introduction to Deuteronomy 13, 14

God's intention for Israel was that they should be a holy people. He set them apart and gave them His Law so that they might excel in loving Him and one another. Whatever threatened that agenda and framework was to be dealt with and removed. Whatever strengthened it was to be assiduously pursued.

Some of the ways God worked to make His people distinct among their neighbors seem strange to us. But who are we? God knows what He's doing, and our duty is to receive His Word by faith, and obey it explicitly. When we do, holiness – and blessing and wisdom – is the result.

Susie and I hope you will find this study challenging and enriching for your walk with and work for the Lord.

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T. M. and Susie Moore

## 1 False Prophets

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 115.1-3*

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,  
But to Your name give glory,  
Because of Your mercy,  
Because of Your truth.  
Why should the Gentiles say,  
“So where *is* their God?”  
But our God *is* in heaven;  
He does whatever He pleases.

*Psalm 115.1-3*

(Plainfield: *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!  
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!  
Why should the nations cry, "Where is their God on high?"  
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

*Today's Text: Deuteronomy 13.1-5*

*Preparation*

1. What does God forbid in worship?
2. How should the people of God avoid this practice?

*Meditation*

It seems clear that worshiping things other than God was going to be a persistent temptation to the people of God. It's only what we might expect. Their hearts were not yet remade for the fear and love of God (cf. Deut. 30.1-10). They were in continuous interaction with pagan peoples. And the reminders of pagan worship centers – high places and groves, mostly – would be part of their familiar landscape. So Moses called the people, over and over, to maintain their purity as the people of God by guarding against whatever might entice them to turn from Him to idols.

In this case, it would be prophets – false prophets. Moses warned the people that impressive teachers and workers of wonders might arise among them from time to time (vv. 1, 2). Their powers of persuasion and signs might be considerable. And some of them would seek to lead the people away from God to the false worship of man-made idols (v. 2). When this happens, the people should realize that God has allowed it to test the mettle of their souls: Do they love God supremely? (v. 3) When they recognize this test for what it is, an opportunity to refortify their commitment to the Lord, then they must refuse to follow the false prophet and continue to walk in all the ways God has commanded them (v. 4).

But the false prophet is a corrupting presence, and must not be tolerated (v. 5). The judges and priests in Israel wielded both civil and spiritual power. Leading people into idolatry was a capital offense, because all idolatry is an abomination to God. The priests had the power to convict, and the judges had power to execute judgment. In the case of those promoting idolatry, that judgment was severe. It was necessary for maintaining the purity of the people that corrupters of the people be removed.

Note that phrase “put away the evil from your midst” (v. 5). Paul quoted this verse to instruct the believers in Corinth to excommunicate one guilty of heinous sin. He was to be put out of the church and turned over to

the world and Satan “for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Cor. 5.5). The Church does not wield civil authority. Government is God’s servant for good in the civil arena (Rom. 13.1-4). Paul believed that this man’s offense required the taking of his life, but it was not in the Church’s power to do so. Still, the Church had to remove the corrupting influence of this man from the fellowship of believers. Cut off from the Lord’s Presence, he would be subject to the destruction of his flesh, either from the state or the devil. Happily, he came to repentance and was restored to the Church in Corinth (2 Cor. 2.3-11).

Instructed by the example of ancient Israel, the Corinthians were serious about maintaining purity. They passed the test, and so did the offending man, to the praise of God’s grace.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

When we are tested, part of the remedy is to “hold fast to Him” (Deut. 13.4). Paul agrees: “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15.1, 2). Jesus concurs: “Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent” (Rev. 3.3). More than anything, we want the Triune God to know that we love Him with all our heart and with all our soul. Therefore, we must be mindful, at all times, of anything that might entice us away “from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk” (Deut. 13.5).

*Reflection*

1. How would you explain what it means to “hold fast” to the Lord and His Word?
2. How would you expect to experience the Lord testing your faith in Him?
3. How can you know whether any false teaching has found a home in your soul?

*“The Lord your God puts you to the test that he might know if you love him.” Now this manner of speaking does not mean that God does not know; rather, [it was said] in order that people might know how far they have progressed in the love of God—a thing which is not fully recognized by them except by way of the testings which come about. Augustine (254-430) On Eighty-Three Varied Questions, 60*

*Thank You, Lord, for showing us how we must worship You. Help me to worship You truly today as I...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 115.4-18*

Listen in silence for the Spirit to search your heart, mind, and conscience. If He discovers any idols, or anything beginning to become an idol, confess and repent of it, and recommit yourself to the Lord.

*Psalm 115.4-18*

*(Plainfield: Nothing but the Blood of Jesus)*

Idols made by men’s own hand – ever to Your Name be glory –  
see nor hear nor understand – ever to Your Name be glory!  
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;  
all those who serve them fall, but unto Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! –  
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!  
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!  
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –  
will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,

*Guarding Purity: Deuteronomy 13, 14*

all who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!

Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!

Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore

and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

## 2 Those Who Corrupt

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 83.1-8*

Do not keep silent, O God!  
Do not hold Your peace,  
And do not be still, O God!  
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;  
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.  
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,  
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.  
They have said, “Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation,  
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.”  
For they have consulted together with one consent;  
They form a confederacy against You:  
The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;  
Moab and the Hagrites;  
Geba, Ammon, and Amalek;  
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;  
Assyria also has joined with them;  
They have helped the children of Lot.

*Psalm 83.1-8*

(St. Chrysostom: [\*We Have not Known Thee As We Ought\*](#))

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!  
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.  
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

“Come, let us wipe them out,” they say. “Let Israel’s name no more be heard!”  
Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.  
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

*Today’s Text: Deuteronomy 13.6-18*

*Preparation*

1. What was so bad about what these people were doing?
2. What measures were to be taken against them?

*Mediation*

Here is the sternest warning and harshest condemnation yet of the practice of idolatry. Over and over, Moses has emphasized that the people must not give themselves to idols. Idolatry leads to the abandonment of God and the good works His Law prescribes; and it leads to paganism, with all the violence, licentiousness, deceit, and death that entailed. Anybody who *practiced* idolatry would be severely judged. Anyone who *drew others away* into idolatry would be more severely judged.

The people must not even spare their loved ones, if their loved ones entice them to worship other gods (vv. 1-10). Even if only corrupt men should cause a whole city to turn to idolatry, that whole community must be destroyed from Israel, just like the Canaanites whom Israel would displace (vv. 12-17).

These terrible judgments against idolatry were meant to deter all Israel from the practice (v. 11), and to keep them listening to the voice of the Lord, and keeping all His commandments (v. 18).

We think the punishments commanded here seem harsh. They *were* harsh; indeed, they were terrible. But what does this tell us about God's love for His people? About His determination to keep them looking to Him and dwelling within His holiness and love? The mere presence of these statutes "on the books" in ancient Israel should have deterred any of those who might have considered corrupting themselves or others. That in fact, they did not, simply reminds us of the hardness of Israel's heart toward God.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Much today seeks to entice us away from the whole Law of God. Things that are bad are said to be good; and we are told we must be tolerant. That being tolerant is showing love. Really? To whom? Isn't tolerance merely throwing in the towel and not truly loving at all? Of course, the civil law is not in our hands, and the judgment rendered in Deuteronomy is no longer ours to carry out; but we must still guard our own hearts, and by doing so, serve the one true God. "The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray." "He who walks with wise *men* will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." "Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits'" (Prov. 12.26, 13.20; 1 Cor. 15.33). These words teach us how to navigate the enticements we come up against every day; and none of these enticements, whatever they may be, should remain in our hands or our hearts. We must be sure that God knows we are listening to His voice, and keeping the commandments He has given us, to do what is right in *His* eyes. We absolutely don't want to be in the fierceness of His anger, but to be shown His mercy and compassion. Then we can reach out to others with this same mercy, compassion, and love. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5.2, 3).

*Reflection*

1. What are some ways that corruption and idolatry work their way into our heart?
2. How can we protect ourselves against such enticements?
3. What should we expect if we continue faithful in the commandments of the Lord?

*Moses teaches first, that the rule of a holy life must be sought from the mouth of God; and then adds that He must be obeyed not partially, but universally. He confirms also what I have said respecting obedience, for men only please God when they listen to His voice. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Deuteronomy 13.18*

*Guard my life against corruption today, Lord, so that I keep Your commandments and...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 83.9-18*

Pray that God would protect His Church from all corruption, and that He would bring revival in the Holy Spirit to all His people.

*Psalm 83.9-18*

(St. Chrysostom: [\*We Have not Known Thee As We Ought\*](#))

Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed, when You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed – all who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!  
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!  
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.  
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,

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that they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

### 3 Purity of Body

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 115.1-3*

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,  
But to Your name give glory,  
Because of Your mercy,  
Because of Your truth.  
Why should the Gentiles say,  
“So where *is* their God?”  
But our God *is* in heaven;  
He does whatever He pleases.

*Psalm 115.1-3*

(Plainfield: [\*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus\*](#))

Not to us, O God, not us, but unto Your Name give glory!  
For Your love and faithfulness, ever to Your Name be glory!  
Why should the nations cry, “Where is their God on high?”  
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

*Today’s Text: Deuteronomy 14.1, 2*

*Preparation*

1. What did God forbid here?
2. Why did He forbid it?

*Meditation*

I think we can understand these verses best by working back to front, from the rationale to the requirement.

The people of Israel were always to remember that they were the “children of the LORD” (v. 1), a “holy people to the LORD” (v. 2), and “a special treasure above all people who *are* on the face of the earth” (v. 2). They were to resemble their Father, both as individuals and as a nation. All their guidance, examples, and cues about how they should live came from God. They were not to adopt practices of the surrounding nations, because they *were not* of those nations, but of God.

The pagans did what God forbade in verse 1. Why? Who knows? Perhaps these were ways of placating some false god, or parading their grief. Cutting yourself doesn’t seem like a very good practice anyway. And shaving “the front of your head” probably would make you stand out in a crowd (“Hey, everybody; look at me!”).

Whatever the reasons *other* nations did such things, *God’s* nation was not to do so. Maintaining purity as the children of God and His chosen people reaches even to what they did with their bodies.

It’s a good lesson for us to remember as well. Do we treat our bodies as temples of the Lord, caring for them, using them as God would, dressing them modestly and simply, getting them the rest they need? Our bodies are the earthen vehicles through which the grace and truth of God flow to bring thanks and praise to Him (2 Cor. 4.7). We’re not free to do with them just whatever anybody else might do. Rather, we need to make sure that “whatever we do” with our bodies is for the glory of God, not just for making a statement, indulging a whim, or gratifying an appetite (1 Cor. 10.31).

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“...and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure...” “For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special treasure.” “But you are...His own special people...who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (Deut. 14.2; Ps. 135.4; 1 Pet. 2.9, 10). To think that we are a special treasure to the majestic Creator and King of kings is an unimaginable yet glorious thought! His tender care for our personal being is for our good. Just as all His laws are for our good. His desire for us is “the beauty of holiness” (1 Chron. 16.29), and that we be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12.2). Our bodies are indeed “the earthen vehicles through which the grace and truth of God flow to bring thanks and praise to Him.”

*Reflection*

1. What does it mean to say that your body is a temple of the Lord?
2. What does Paul mean by referring to us as “earthen vessels”? For what use?
3. What does it mean to be a holy people unto the Lord?

*Pagan mourning rituals encouraged physical abuse. These practices were a form of magic by which people sought to exercise control over their well-being and over the gods (1 Kin. 18:28)... the Israelites were set apart to the Lord, separated from the nations, and chosen to practice the will of God on earth. The Hebrew word translated holy means “to be separate” or “to be distinct.” Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Note on Deuteronomy 14.1, 2*

*Lord, I offer my body today as a living sacrifice to You, so help me to...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 115.9-18*

Ask the Lord in prayer to show you ways you can more consistently and fruitfully use your body to bring thanks, praise, and glory to Him.

*Psalm 115.9-18*

(Plainfield: [\*Nothing but the Blood of Jesus\*](#))

All who trust in Jesus yield – ever to His Name be glory! –  
find in Him their help and shield – ever to Your Name be glory!  
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!  
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – ever to Your Name be glory –  
will attend us evermore – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,  
all who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore  
and bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

## 4 Clean and Unclean Meats

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 118.26-29*

Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD!  
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.  
God *is* the LORD,  
And He has given us light;  
Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.  
You *are* my God, and I will praise You;  
You *are* my God, I will exalt You.  
Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!  
For His mercy *endures* forever.

*Psalm 118.26-29*

(St. George's Windsor: [\*Come, Ye Thankful People, Come\*](#))  
Blessed are they who in His Name come and Jesus' grace proclaim.  
God His light upon us shines in the Savior's sacrifice.  
Praise and thanks to You, O Lord; we extol Your holy Word!  
Thanks to You for You are good! Thanks to our great loving God!

*Today's Text: Deuteronomy 14.3-21*

*Preparation*

1. Which animals could the people of Israel *not* eat? Why not?
2. How did Moses describe the meat they *could* eat?

*Meditation*

OK. I think we can be brief here. But first, we have to keep in our minds that ultimately, all these prohibitions are going to be removed. First, Jesus declared all foods clean, according to Mark 7.18, 19 (see the ESV here, which follows the Greek New Testament more closely than NKJV). Second, as if to restate and reinforce Jesus' statement, God showed Peter a vision of unclean animals, commanded him to eat from them, and declared that He had made them all clean (Acts 10.9-15). Peter interpreted this vision as God opening the way to ingraft Gentiles into the covenant community of the Gospel. This was such an important step that the story is told twice in the book of Acts!

So clearly, the notion of there being certain animals that were considered "unclean" for eating has little to do with whether they are tasty or nutritious. There may be some reasons for caution in eating some of these meats, but caution taken, they're all available to us now. The reason for abstaining from these was so that Israel would stand out as a distinct people. The indicators He provided – chewing cud, split hooves, no scales, etc. – were merely to help His people keep straight about what they should not eat. They were to obey God in everything He commanded, even if this meant they looked a little weird to some of their neighbors.

Eating something that dies of itself is perhaps not a good idea at any rate (v. 21). I'm not sure about the proscription against boiling a young goat in its mother's milk. But God said it, so it's what He wanted.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

"You shall not eat any detestable thing." Execrable, abhorrent, loathsome, odious, vile. These are synonyms for the word detestable; and detestable means arousing or meriting intense dislike: abominable. At this point

in history, God wanted the children of Israel to see certain things as inedible. Now God wants us to see our sin the same way. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 5:4-6 when dealing with the man caught in a detestable sin: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” Beware that this sin, if ingested and digested into your body of believers, will affect everyone.

*Reflection*

1. What does it mean to hate sin? Why is it important to do so?
2. God made Israel distinct in part by the foods they ate. How does He make us, His people, distinct today?
3. How can believers encourage one another to obey God in all His commands?

*The dietary regulations set Israel apart from the nations (Lev. 11). Most likely, God prohibited certain animals from being eaten in order to distinguish the practices of Israel from those of neighboring nations. With this physical sign, God symbolized Israel's holiness. Israel was dedicated to His purposes, not the world's. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Note on Deuteronomy 14:3*

*I may not understand all Your reasons, Lord; but help me to understand Your Word, and I will...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 118:14-24*

We are clean in the blood of Jesus, and free to serve Him joyfully every day. Offer the day ahead to the Lord and yourself as a living sacrifice to Him.

*Psalm 118:14-24*

(St. George's Windsor: [\*Come, Ye Thankful People, Come\*](#))

In the Savior we are strong! He is all our strength and song!  
To His grace now raise your voice; in His righteousness rejoice!  
For the Lord does valiantly; we shall live eternally.  
Praise His works with all your breath, you whom He redeems from death.

All who know Christ's righteousness His great Name now thank and bless!  
Though His gate full righteous is, He our saving mercy is.  
Cast aside and left alone, Christ is now our Cornerstone!  
God has made His Son and Word our salvation: Praise the Lord!

## 5 The Regular Tithe

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 111.1, 2*

Praise the LORD!

I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,

In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.

The works of the LORD *are* great,

Studied by all who have pleasure in them.

*Psalm 111.1, 2*

(Manoah: [\*When All Your Mercies, O My God\*](#))

Praise the Lord! O let my heart give praise here amid His chosen race!

Your works are great, O Lord, and sought by all who know their grace.

*Today's Text: Read Deuteronomy 14.22-27*

*Preparation*

1. What did God's people demonstrate by giving the tithe?
2. What was to be their attitude in tithing?

*Meditation*

The tithe mentioned here was an annual gift, given at the place designated, amounting to some ten percent of the flocks, herds, and harvests of the people. Offerings were made locally, and administered by priests and Levites in every town and district. But this tithe was given annually, and was stored up as calves and lambs were born, or olives and grain harvested, so that it could all be brought in one trip. We see Paul emulating this practice in 1 Corinthians 16.1-3.

Thus, the total giving of the people of Israel would have been considerably more than the annual tithe. That was the starting-point; but the people gave as they and their local clergy required.

It's important to see that fulfilling this tithe – and by implication, all the other offerings the Lord required in His Law – the people would learn to fear God (v. 23). Fearing God is the first step in loving Him, as we saw in Deuteronomy 10.12ff. Tithing can help us grow in the fear of God, and the fear of God helps us to grow in wisdom (Ps. 111.10).

We remember that, for a time at least, the tabernacle moved around a bit. And even when it finally became stationary in Jerusalem, that could be a long trek for some folks, too far to be driving animals and carrying large bundles. So they were allowed to cash in their tithe, come to the tabernacle, and purchase appropriate offerings there (vv. 24-26). This is where the practice described in John 2 has its origin. It's not hard to imagine that this became corrupted rather quickly – as often happens when money changes hands.

The people were to give faithfully, so that those who served them in offerings, teaching, and judging could be provided for amply. The Levites had no permanent inheritance in Israel; they were dependent on the tithes and offerings of the people (v. 27). Paul applied that principle to himself and to all those who minister the Word of God as their calling life (cf. 1 Cor. 9.3-14; Gal. 6.6).

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“Truly tithe.” Obey. Why? Because especially when things don't make sense to us, we need to just do it and do it God's way. And by doing it God's way, we learn to fear the LORD our God always. And when we obey,

even when it doesn't make sense, God brings joy into our hearts. This is something we can do, which in the doing of it, makes us rejoice. Simply by keeping the regular tithe. It belongs to Him anyway, so we get credit for not stealing too! "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings" (Mal. 3.8). It is a win/win situation!

*Reflection*

1. How would you counsel a new believer to practice giving tithes and offerings?
2. What benefits come from faithfully tithing and offering to the Lord?
3. How does tithing promote the fear of God?

*... the tithes of the neighboring country, as convenience offered, were carried to Jerusalem; whilst those which were collected in more distant places were set aside there; but that they were accounted for at Jerusalem, so that upon a calculation of the number of their families, an equal distribution might be made to the Levites. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Deuteronomy 14.22*

*Lord, You require my tithes and offerings, and I will give them joyfully and faithfully so that...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 111.3-10*

Thank God for all His great and generous works; commit yourself to tithing from what He gives you, so that you will grow in fearing Him and in wisdom.

*Psalm 111.3-10*

(Manoah: [\*When All Your Mercies, O My God\*](#))

For Your work is full of splendor, Lord, and of majesty most pure;  
Your righteousness, O glorious God, forever will endure!

You have caused Your many wondrous works to remain before our face.  
For You are full of mercy, Lord, and abounding all in grace.

For all who fear You, You provide; Your covenant endures.  
Your pow'r You show Your people, Lord, and make the nations theirs.

The works of Your all-sovereign hands are faithful, Lord, and just.  
Your precepts ever more are true and worthy of our trust.

You have sent redemption, to us, Lord, in Christ of cov'nant fame,  
and we in wonder, grace, and awe adore Your holy Name.

All they who would true wisdom know must learn to fear You, Lord,  
and in that wisdom daily live and praise You evermore.

## 6 The Third-Year Tithe

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 128.1, 2*

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,  
Who walks in His ways.  
When you eat the labor of your hands,  
You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.

*Psalm 128.1, 2*

(Fountain: [\*There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood\*](#))

How blessed are they who fear You, Lord, who walk within Your ways!  
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!  
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!  
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

*Today's Text: Deuteronomy 14.28, 29*

*Preparation*

1. What's different about this tithe and the regular tithe?
2. Who was to benefit from this tithe?

*Meditation*

A special tithe was instituted for every third year. Instead of bringing the annual tithe to the central place, the people would keep it within their own towns and villages (v. 28). Then it would be used not only for the Levites, but also for the “stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* within your gates” (v. 29). This is a form of *distributive* justice, in which the people were obliged to care for the needy in their midst, including those who may have come from other nations to dwell with them.

Biblical justice is a gem with five facets. It begins in *obligatory* justice – what we owe to each person as an image-bearer of God, and which can be summarized as love. Next comes *preventive* justice, in which we take steps to ensure the wellbeing of our neighbors and their property by, for example, keeping our animals from grazing on their lands. *Retributive* justice exacts penalties on those who violate the person of another. These can include beatings, exile from the community, and even capital punishment. Then *restorative* justice – such as we see Zacchaeus planning, and Jesus commending (Lk. 19.1-11) – seeks to right a wrong through returning to another what was broken, lost, or taken, sometimes with interest. Then *distributive* justice caps off the justice gem. In addition to what we see in today's text, leaving gleanings for the poor was another form of this aspect of Biblical justice.

The principles of justice outlined in the Law of God remain valid today; only the practice changes, according to the circumstances of our times. The third-year tithe should remind Christian congregations that all that we have is from the Lord, and we must learn to use it as He guides and instructs. If we will, everyone in our community will “eat and be satisfied” and God will bless us in all our work (v. 29).

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

This passage puts me in mind of Rudyard Kipling's poem, “If.” If only the people of God had been obedient in showing kindness. And now, if only the Church had obeyed, we would have places of worship full to the brim. Kipling's end to all his “ifs” was a son who became a nice man. God's end result for us is that the people of the world would see the Church as the joy of the whole earth” (Ps. 48.2). What if we had cared for the “stranger, the fatherless, and the widow”? What if instead of turning all these things over to the

government, the Church had fulfilled her responsibilities? Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself” (Jn. 12.32). It is never too late to start obeying. We can always begin to emulate the New Testament Church. Here is the result of their obedience to God’s commands: “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2.44-47).

If.

*Reflection*

1. What do these tithes teach us about being a community of believers?
2. Finish the following: “If My people, who are called by My Name...” “If you love Me...” “If anyone hears My voice and opens the door...” Now put your answers together into one sentence.
3. How can believers encourage one another to carry out our “ifs”?

*Now, this was a most equitable arrangement, that the priests and Levites having been well provided for during two years, should admit their poor brethren and strangers to a share.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 14.28, 29*

*Help me to be alert to every opportunity to exercise justice toward my neighbors, Lord, so that...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 128.3-6*

The Lord’s blessings are for those who trust Him and obey His Word, including in the matter of tithes and offerings. Offer yourself to the Lord for this day, and seek the good path He has marked out for you in His Law.

*Psalm 128.3-6*

(Fountain: [\*There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood\*](#))

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;  
their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!  
Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!  
Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp’rous make our ways;  
thus may Your blessings e’er increase upon us all our days!  
Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!  
Thus may Your blessings e’er increase upon all us all our days!

## 7 Called to Be Holy

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 51.10-13*

Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from Your presence,  
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.  
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,  
And uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit.  
*Then* I will teach transgressors Your ways,  
And sinners shall be converted to You.

*Psalm 51.10-13*

(Passion Chorale: [\*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded\*](#))

Create in me a clean heart, renew me from within!  
Take not Your Spirit from me because of all my sin.  
Salvation's joy restore, Lord, and keep me in Your hand;  
thus shall I tell Your strong Word to sinners in the land.

*Review Deuteronomy 13 and 14; meditate on Deuteronomy 14.2*

*Preparation*

1. Why did God choose Israel?
2. How did He intend for them to relate to the other peoples of the earth?

*Meditation*

Jesus prayed that His followers might be “sanctified” by the truth of God’s Word (Jn. 17.17). Moses instructed Israel in essentially the same manner. To be sanctified means to be set apart as holy unto the Lord, to be recognizably different from all other people by virtue of the Presence of God. Israel was to be so submitted to and saturated with the Law of God and all His Word, that they would stand out in wisdom and holiness above all the surrounding nations.

Whatever threatened that sanctified condition had to be dealt with immediately and thoroughly. Whatever encouraged it must be adopted and followed assiduously.

Thus, false prophets and those who would entice Israel to follow other gods must not be tolerated in the holy nation. Even if whole cities rebelled against the Lord, the people must move to extirpate them from the nation.

On the other hand, certain dietary measures and practices of giving would conduce to making the people of Israel distinct, both by what they did not do (eat certain meats) and by what they did (care for the least among them, including foreigners). By abstaining from certain kinds of meat, the people of Israel would continuously remind themselves that they were not like the pagan nations around them. By tithing and giving offerings to the Lord, they showed their constant love for Him and their neighbors.

The purity of Israel as a holy nation unto the Lord – His special treasure – depended on such measures as these. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are also called to be holy (cf. Matt. 5.48, quoting Lev. 11.44, 19.2). The quest for holiness must be grounded in God’s Word, as Jesus taught, beginning with His holy and righteous

and good Law (Matt. 5.17-19; Rom. 7.12).

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Yes. We are called to be holy. But not to be holy for Aunt Fran or Grandma Mary. Not even for Uncle Bob, or the elders of our church, or to impress the pastor, or make our neighbors ooh and aah over our holiness. No. We are called to be holy *to the LORD our God!* We are His chosen, special treasure, and our holiness is for Him: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine” (Is. 43.1). “...He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...” (Eph. 1.4). This holiness unto Him should be the main feature of our life, right up to the end of our life. We read that the angel said to John in Revelation 22.11, “...he who is holy, let him be holy still.” Because Jesus then says, “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Rev. 22.12). We are called to be holy to the LORD by keeping His Law: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7.12). “Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward” (Ps. 19.11). To Him. For Him. Because of Him. Called to be holy.

*Reflection*

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to be holy?
2. Why is the Law of God an important component for us in growing in holiness?
3. Why do you suppose holiness has fallen so low on the agenda of many Christians?

*But let us ask our own hearts, Are we of the children of the Lord our God? Are we separate from the ungodly world, in being set apart to God's glory, the purchase of Christ's blood? Are we subjects of the work of the Holy Ghost? Matthew Henry (1622-1714), Commentary on Deuteronomy 14.1-21*

*You have called me to seek Your Kingdom and righteousness, Lord. Help me do so today as I...*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 51.1-9*

We can't be holy if sin lingers in our soul. Wait on the Lord in prayer to search your soul and lead you to confession and repentance as needed. Thank the Lord for His provision for our holiness in Jesus and His Word.

*Psalm 51.1-9*

(Passion Chorale: [\*O Sacred Head, Now Wounded\*](#))

Be gracious to me, Savior, according to Your love!  
According to Your mercy, my sins, my sins remove!  
O wash me, precious Savior, and cleanse me from all sin;  
look on me with Your favor, and cause my grief to end.

Against You only, Savior, have I become unclean;  
thus just the condemnation which You pronounce on me.  
Lord, I was born to sinning, while You seek truth within;  
to wisdom my heart winning, release me from my sin!

In Jesus' blood and mercy, Lord, cleanse my evil heart!  
Let me washed, cleansed, renewed be and pure in whole and part.  
Bring joy again and gladness; look not upon my sin.  
Deliver me from sadness; renew me yet again!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. What does it mean to be a holy people unto the Lord?
2. What can keep us from bringing holiness to completion in the fear of the Lord (2 Cor. 7.1)?
3. What resources has God provided for us to increase in holiness? How should we use these?
4. What role do tithes and offerings play in help us to be a holy people unto the Lord?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Deuteronomy 13 and 14? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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