

# One Final Commandment in the Law

## Deuteronomy 26

Expository Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy

---

### I. Introduction

- a. First, some good news.
  - i. “For Christ is *the end of the law* for righteousness to everyone who believes.” (**Romans 10:4**, NKJV)
  - ii. The word “end” can have many meanings, including:
    1. The final piece, or
    2. The ultimate objective or fulfillment (which is the sense I assume Paul has in mind in the passage just quoted).
  - iii. With this lesson, in one sense, we have at last come to “*the end of the Law*” of Moses.
    1. Here we find (I think) essentially the last specific rule in the Law. Of perhaps over a hundred that Moses has laid out in his second address.
    2. After this final command, Moses concludes his lengthy second address (which has taken 22 chapters) with a general admonition to obey all these things. The rest of the book of **Deuteronomy** contains important general concluding remarks given prior to Moses' death.
- b. The **Book of Deuteronomy** consists of three speeches that Moses gave to the Israelites near the end of their 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness.
- c. In **Deuteronomy 26**, we have come to the close of Moses' second address (of the three). The three speeches are as follows:
  - i. **Speech No. 1: Deuteronomy 1-4** (first four chapters)
  - ii. **Speech No. 2: Deuteronomy 5-26** (twenty-two chapters; about 25 lessons for us)
    1. This section covers all the specific laws and regulations.
    2. It includes:
      - a. The giving of the Ten Commandments, retold.
      - b. What has been called ‘the heart of the Old Testament.’

- c. The Greatest Commandment (**Deuteronomy 6:4-5**).
- d. “Man does not live by bread alone...” (**Deuteronomy 8:3**).
- e. Kosher dietary laws restated (**Deuteronomy 14**).
- f. Rules for the future king (**Deuteronomy 17**).
- g. Most detailed prophecy, “a prophet like Moses...” (**Deuteronomy 18:15-19**).
- h. Laws regulating divorce and remarriage after divorce. (**Deuteronomy 24:1-4**)
- i. Lots of instructions to take care of the poor and needy, treat others well (illustrating the second greatest commandment).
- j. Many timeless principles, some introduced here in rather enigmatic form, but later explained in the New Testament. For example:
  - i. “Expel the wicked person from among you.” (pertaining to church discipline)
  - ii. “By the mouth of two or witnesses...” (addressing sin, church discipline)
  - iii. “Do not muzzle the ox...” (financial support for those serving full-time in the ministry)
  - iv. “Do not plow with bull and donkey together.” (reminiscent of Paul’s teaching on holiness and separation from the world in **2 Corinthians 6:14**, based on “do not be unequally yoked”)
- iii. **Speech No. 3: Deuteronomy 27-34** (the last eight chapters of the book), addresses:
  1. Final wrap-up of the Law, including warnings and blessings that will follow depending on whether the Israelites obey or disobey what has just been handed down.
  2. Account of the death of Moses and the handoff of leadership to his assistant, Joshua.

## II. The Last Commandment or Rule

- a. **Question:** After considering all the rules and commands in the Law we have seen thus far (covering worship of God, marriage and household, showing generosity to those in need, agricultural practices, warfare, justice in the community, dietary restrictions, etc.), what do you think the Lord would hit as *His final specific rule* under the Law?
- b. Read **Deuteronomy 26:1-4**.
  - i. This is a command to give an offering to the Lord from the firstfruits of the land, after they enter Canaan.
- c. Read **Deuteronomy 26:5-15**.
  - i. This addresses more about that offering, explaining the reason behind it.
  - ii. When giving the offering, they were to recount to the Lord:
    1. How He delivered them from bondage in Egypt, hearing them when they cried out to Him, working great signs and wonders.
    2. How He brought them all the way through the Wilderness, into a land “following with milk and honey.”
      - a. Obviously, the “flowing with milk and honey” line is a poetic reference to the goodness of the land (suitable for honeybees and for sheep and goats and other livestock to graze).
      - b. This is an example that while everything in the Scriptures is true and accurate, not every statement was intended to be taken literally. That is the case when an author uses a figure of speech or poetic language to convey truth.
      - c. In my opinion, the goal for those reading the Scriptures should always be to seek *the author’s intent*.
  - iii. A second tithe from the produce of the land was to be given to feed “the resident aliens, the fatherless and widows” among them.
  - iv. This was all about remembering what the Lord had done and being grateful for it.
  - v. To me, this is returning to a point Moses had made near the beginning of this second speech. There, he laid out the danger of the future, when they would see prosperity. They would be tempted to forget

their past, lose their gratitude to the Lord, and become prideful. In the passage we just read, Moses shows how they can overcome that tendency (by regularly being reminded how God delivered them in the past).

1. Read **Deuteronomy 8:11-20**.

- a. The Lord knew that prosperity in the future would test His people in a new way. They would forget where they came from, grow arrogant when they saw the wealth they were able to produce, become self-reliant, and eventually turn away from the Lord's commands and abandon Him for other 'gods.'

2. Jesus also expressed concern about the dangers that come with prosperity. He warned His followers about that in His parable of the four soils, in the example of the third soil.

- a. "And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: 'A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. *And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.* But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.' When He had said these things He cried, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'" (**Luke 8:4-8**, NKJV)
- b. "...Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and *are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life*, and bring no fruit to maturity. But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience." (**Luke 8:14-15**, NKJV)

3. Paul warned about this problem, as well.

- a. "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in

destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” (1 Timothy 6:6-10, NKJV)

b. “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.” (1 Timothy 6:17-19, NKJV)

i. Note that Paul sees the same danger from prosperity that Moses sees, and points to the same remedy.

1. *Do not forget* that God gave us all the wealth we have, and be thankful for it.

2. Both Paul and Moses command God’s people to give and be generous toward others.

d. Practical implications for us.

i. Let us beware of the spiritual danger that comes with prosperity, which has destroyed so many Christians in our own culture.

ii. We need to stay humble, grateful, and thankful for everything that the Lord has given us.

iii. Be generous toward others who are in need.

iv. And never forget what we have been delivered from.

e. A practical illustration of what the word “holy” means.

i. Re-read from **Deuteronomy 26:13**: “...Then you shall say before the Lord your God, ‘I cleared out the *holy things* from my house and also gave them to the Levite, the resident alien, the fatherless and the widow....”

ii. The one making the offering was able to say regarding his offerings (from **Deuteronomy 26:14**):

1. I did not eat them when in mourning;

2. I did not use them for unclean purposes; and
  3. I did not give the dedicated things for other purposes.
- iii. We can see a practical definition of the word “*holy*” from this passage in context. It means *something set apart for a special purpose*.
1. Similar to **Exodus 30:22-38**, where the specially formulated incense and anointing oil were referred to as “holy”, meaning they were set apart (reserved) for special use in the temple. They could not be used for common household purposes.
  2. Whenever you see the word “holy,” keep practical examples like this in mind. God is set apart from His creation, and calls us to be set apart for Him.
    - a. People confuse holiness with righteousness and/or being flawless or sinless. While we need to be all of those things, holiness means being reserved or set apart for a special purpose (and therefore unavailable for other, common uses).

### III. Closing Comments from the end of Moses’ Second Address

- a. Read **Deuteronomy 26:16-19**.
- b. God is not just looking for legalistic obedience to the letter of the Law. He is looking for His followers who will keep all His ordinances and commands *with all their heart and with all their soul*.
  - i. While this involves simple obedience, I believe it goes well beyond mechanical observance of a set of rules.
  - ii. Jesus taught the same thing. God is looking for a love of Him that results in obedience.
    1. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” (**John 14:15**, NKJV)
    2. “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; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.’” (**John 14:23-24**, NKJV)
- c. The Lord called them to be “His special people, set high over all the nations” and “a holy people to the Lord.”

- i. **Question:** What happened to Israel? *Are they still* God's holy nation and His special people? Modern 'Christian Zionists' certainly seem to think so. However...
  1. The "special people" of God were called to "walk in His ways, keep His ordinances and obey His voice."
  2. For the most part, Israel has rejected all those things. Most of those who would "hear the voice of the Lord" and obey it have been Gentiles.
    - a. [regarding the Gentiles who would believe] "But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me.' *But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people.'*" (**Romans 10:20-21**, NKJV)
    - b. Paul goes on to explain that most of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in rejecting Christ, were *like branches of a cultivated olive tree that were broken off, because they had rejected Jesus.* (**Romans 11:16-34**).
  3. Similarly, consider what Paul (a Jewish believer) said while preaching to his fellow Jews (who were unbelievers) in Rome, at the end of the book of **Acts**.
    - a. Read **Acts 28:23-29**.
    - b. Paul used prophecies from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets to prove that Jesus was the promised Christ, the Son of God.
    - c. Some of the Jews who heard him believed, but others did not.
    - d. Paul then blasted the unbelieving Jews who rejected the gospel of Christ. He quoted **Isaiah 6:9-10**, saying they had "closed their eyes" and "hardened their hearts."
    - e. He concluded that since they had rejected the good news, he would now take the message of salvation to the Gentiles.
- ii. Regarding the modern State of Israel and the Jews.

1. The Jews are no longer considered by God to be His chosen people. Let us listen to what Paul, Isaiah and the Holy Spirit said rather than listening to eloquent modern Zionists.
  2. The Jews were rejected and separated from the 'tree' (the kingdom of God), but can be grafted back in if they turn and follow Jesus.
  3. Christians do not need to reflexively support the interests of the modern state of Israel today, especially in Israel's conflicts with others.
- d. We Christians have received the opportunity to become God's special people and holy nation. Once again, that is a conditional promise. We must remain faithful to Him. Otherwise, we too, like Israel, will be like branches broken from the olive tree! Let us learn from the example of the Israelites.
- i. Peter borrows from the language and imagery used by Moses to describe the church, now God's special people and holy nation.
  - ii. Read **1 Peter 2:7-12**.
    1. "Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,' and 'A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.'
    2. "They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.
    3. "But *you are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a *holy nation, His own special people*, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.
    4. "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." (**1 Peter 2:7-12**, NKJV)

#### IV. Conclusions and Takeaways

- a. Thank God that we are no longer bound by all the requirements of the Law of Moses.

- b. The last specific new command in the Law of Moses, at the end of Moses' lengthy second address, was to remain grateful and thankful when prosperity comes, and to give of one's first fruits as a holy offering to the Lord.
  - i. Let us avoid the age-old temptation to forget what God has delivered us from, to take personal credit for any wealth that comes our way, and to end up straying from God and His commands.
  - ii. Let us return thanks to the Lord, remember all He has done for us, and demonstrate our gratitude by giving to His work and to those in need, from what the Lord has allowed us to receive.
- c. Never forget that God has always been looking for those who will love him with all their heart and soul. They will obey His laws and commands, and heed His voice. That has always been the case.
- d. Don't follow the (mostly bad) example of the Israelites, who hardened their hearts and closed their eyes and ears to the Lord.
- e. Physical Israel rejected the voice of the Lord, and He rejected them (but His arms remain open for their return).
- f. Physical Israel abandoned the Lord, and is no longer His special people and holy nation. We have an opportunity to be that, through faith, if we remain faithful to the Lord.
  - i. Let us learn from Israel's mistakes and not repeat them!