

## Kill Covetousness with Thankful Generosity – Deuteronomy 26:1-19

**Introduction** – We come to the end of the exposition on the tenth commandment as well as the exposition of all Ten Words (which began in 4:44). We learn from the first fruit offerings and tithes that we do not give to lose, nor to simply get more, but rather to bless. Freedom from covetousness comes from thankfulness displayed to Yahweh and generosity given in His name.

**Celebrating the Tithe** (vv1-11) – We are not to tithe because God is a little short on cash. Our offerings are not brought before God because He is lacking. These are tributes to the One who has generously given us all things and the act of tithing in celebration. At the heart of it is the opportunity to root out covetousness from our hearts by means giving to God and giving in His name. Contrary to pagan practices and offerings from the harvests, the Israelites were to bring their tithe to the central place of worship (vv1-2). There, they were to declare that the reason they had anything to offer was because they were dwelling in a land which Yahweh gave them (v3). This was followed by a strict liturgy, directing the worshipper to remember God's deliverance of His people in time and space (vv4-8), and bringing himself personally into that story and the results of God's faithfulness (vv9-10), finally enjoying part of that offering in fellowship with God and His people (also Deut 14:22-29).

**Firstfruits as a Type** – We also now can see how these offerings symbolize far greater realities. The Holy Spirit given to us is a firstfruit of the coming harvest of resurrection (8:23), and firstfruits are also representative of the first of a great Harvest to come (Rom 16:5, 1 Cor 16:15, James 1:18, Rev 14:4). They also represent Jesus Christ as the first-raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:20, 25).

**Grace/Obedience/Blessing** (vv11-15) – The obedience of tithing comes out of the recognition and rejoicing in the grace of God given to us. This allows tithing to be something we do as an imitation of our kind, generous, heavenly Father. And so, the tithe system included years where the tithe did not go to the central sanctuary, but to support the local Levite and teachers, the immigrants, the orphans, widows, and those in great need in your midst (v12). This charity had to be done and had to be done in the name of Yahweh (not in the name of one's own generosity). The worshipper then took a vow before Yahweh that he had imitated Yahweh in generosity, and that he had not instead squandered the tithe in any pagan practices (vv13-14). Having obeyed the LORD from a cheerful heart, the worshipper was then commanded to seek the blessing of God (v15). When this kind of blessing is sought in this kind of mindset, we are not guilty of treating God like a vending machine. Instead, in seeking the blessing for more, we are asking for more resources so that we can continue and increase in our imitation of God. And this leads us to the last section where we come to understand what God intends to do with a redeemed people who imitate Him in kindness, grace, holiness, and blessing. Covetousness wants stuff. Kindness wants resources. Rich men are to receive their riches as blessings from God with great thankfulness, enjoy these things without guilt, and use them to bless others – just like God (1 Tim 6:17-19). And this kind of generosity kills covetousness.

**High Above All Nations** (vv16-19) – Moses is coming to the end of this sermon and with it comes the demands of response. “Today” Israel was to declare that Yahweh was their God and that they would walk in His ways (understanding the law rightly, why would they want to do any different?). “Today” Yahweh proclaimed Israel to be His special people, according to His promises. Those promises would enable Israel to keep God's commandments. And this nation, imitating God in His righteousness, grace, and kindness, would be set “high above all nations” – they would receive this “in praise, in name, and in honor” in order to be a consecrated/holy people to Yahweh.

**Gospel Trajectory** – So where is this all going? What story is Yahweh telling, what sermon is Moses preaching? This is not the story that ends with a small remnant barely making it out of here saved before God destroys the world. Jesus, upon His ascension to the throne of David, having bestowed grace and kindness on the cross, has the same trajectory (Matt 28:18-20). Whenever we see the firstfruits of any gospel work, we must remember that it is only the firstfruits of a great, promised harvest. The Lord will build His church and the gates of Hades will not be able to stop it. The direction of His kingdom is overwhelming blessing, overwhelming generosity, overwhelming kindness and grace – and that nation will be set on high above all nations. Those nations will stream to the mountain of the Lord and His grace.

**Kingdom Renewal for All** – God sets aside special times for Kingdom renewal, and the Lord's Day service is one such time. “Today” is to be declared today. Today, declare the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as your God – for the first time, or again. Do so with joy and gladness and bring forth proof of your blessing in tithes, offerings, and the sacrifice of praise. Hear again the promised declaration of God that He is your God and you are His people. The Holy Spirit is at work, and so children should naturally turn and say, “this is my parents' God and so of course, He is my God as well” and trust in Him and renew their own faith as they grow up in these promises. Hebrews 3-4 warns us not to wave off “today” with unbelief and rebellion. “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”