

Giving to Others

Key Verse: “*For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.*”
—*Deuteronomy 15:11*

Selected Scripture:
Deuteronomy 15:4-11

preserve us alive, as we are this day.”—Deut. 6:24,
English Standard Version

It is against this backdrop of God’s goodness that he tells Israel, through Moses, that poverty need never exist in Israel if the people obey his commands. Our lesson is situated in a section of Deuteronomy focused on various instructions regarding worship. The previous chapter separates animals into clean and unclean and provides instructions on the giving of tithes. The following chapter discusses the Passover feast and other festivals within the Israelites’ worship calendar.

The book of Deuteronomy has been described as a summary of the whole law of God. Nearly the entire book reiterates the commandments and instructions that God had delivered to the Israelites through Moses. God gave his law to Israel as instructions that they were to follow. The following words of Moses show us that God’s law is a field guide, as it were, to how life should be lived. “The LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might

Deuteronomy 15 can be seen as a foreshadowing of God's words found later in Isaiah 58:6,7, *New King James Version*, where he states what he requires from worship: "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?"

Our lesson outlines the way in which the Israelites were to live their lives in worship towards God. They were to observe the sabbatical year every seventh year, at which time debts were to be forgiven. (Deut. 15:1-3) They were to open their hearts and hands to those in need, providing whatever they might lack. (vss. 7-10) There were to be no stipulations. If there was a need, it was to be met. There would be no poor among them if they would keep the commands of God faithfully.

In the Old Testament the Lord distinctly set before the Israelites earthly prosperity as a reward for obedience and loyalty to him and his laws. This has been a stumbling-block to those who do not recognize the fact of the dispensational change that took place as a result of Jesus' ministry. Many have mistakenly applied the promise of prosperity to the Christian, and this error has resulted in confusion of mind.

Earthly prosperity in the present age is not promised to faithful Christians. Therefore, let us exercise the law of love toward others as instructed by the Apostle John: "Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."
—I John 3:16-18, *New International Version* ■