

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**7-27-22**

**Deuteronomy 15**

**Release Of Debts Every Seventh Year – Verses 1-6**

**<sup>1</sup> At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. <sup>2</sup> This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the LORD's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. <sup>3</sup> You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. <sup>4</sup> However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, <sup>5</sup> if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. <sup>6</sup> For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.**

**15:1** You shall grant a release of debts: In Israel, money was always loaned with the understanding that every seventh year, debts would be canceled. So there was no long-term debt in this sense - money could never be borrowed, or owed, for more than six years.

**15:2** It is the LORD's release: This was an important matter to God; the release was said to be the LORD's release. As Israel obeyed this command, there would never be a permanent under-class in Israel. Some might go through a bad period, but would have the opportunity to rebuild their lives financially on a regular basis.

**15:4** When there may be no poor among you: God established an economic system wherein no one had to be chronically poor. If people would obey the LORD, He would bless (both sovereignly and as the natural result of the obedience), and they would not be poor.

However, Deuteronomy 15:11 - just a few verses down - states: For the poor will never cease from the land. Is God contradicting Himself? Not at all. He knows that He has established a system where no one must be chronically poor, yet He knew that because of disobedience, some would, and there would always be the poor in Israel. So, God did not guarantee prosperity for any one in Israel; but He did guarantee opportunity for prosperity for an obedient Israel.

**15:6** You shall lend to many nations: If Israel obeyed and the individual citizens of Israel enjoyed the blessing of God's prosperity, then they would as a nation be prosperous, and blessed above other nations.

**The Command To Be Generous To The Poor – Verses 7-11**

**<sup>7</sup> If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. <sup>8</sup> Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. <sup>9</sup> Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. <sup>10</sup> Give generously to them**

**and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. <sup>11</sup> There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.**

**15:7-11** God told the Israelites to help the poor among them when they arrived in the Promised Land. This was an important part of possessing the land. Many people conclude that people are poor through some fault of their own. This kind of reasoning makes it easy to close their hearts and hands to the needy. But we are not to invent reasons for ignoring the poor. We are to respond to their needs no matter who or what was responsible for their condition. Who are the poor in your community? How could your church help them? If your church does not have a program to identify the poor and assist in fulfilling their needs, why not help start one? What can you do to help someone in need?

### **The Command To Release Slaves Every Seventh Year – Verses 12-15**

**<sup>12</sup> If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. <sup>13</sup> And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. <sup>14</sup> Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the LORD your God has blessed you. <sup>15</sup> Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.**

**15:12-15** The Israelites were to release their servants after six years, sending them away with enough food so that they would be amply supplied until their needs could be met by some other means. This humanitarian act recognized that God created each person with dignity and worth. It also reminded the Israelites that they, too, had once been slaves in Egypt, and that their present freedom was a gift from God. We do not have servants such as these today, but God's instructions still apply to us: We must still be sure to treat our employees with respect and economic fairness.

### **The Law Of The Bond-Slave – Verses 16-18**

**<sup>16</sup> But if your servant says to you, "I do not want to leave you," because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, <sup>17</sup> then take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your female servant. <sup>18</sup> Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because their service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.**

**15:16** If it happens that he says to you, "I will not go away from you": If a slave loved his master, and wanted to continue to serve him, he was not required to leave his master at the seventh year. Because he loves you ... you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door: The willing slave could stay, and his status was declared by piercing through his ear lobe with an awl at the door of his master's home. In this, he declared his love and devotion to his master - a willing slave, who was free to choose and yet chose his master.

Jesus is the great fulfillment of this willing slave. Jesus said prophetically in Psalm 40:6: My ears You have opened, it speaks of this "opening" of the ear in the bond-slave ceremony. He was the willing bond-slave of God the Father.

## **The Firstborn Animals – Verse 19**

**<sup>19</sup> Set apart for the LORD your God every firstborn male of your herds and flocks. Do not put the firstborn of your cows to work, and do not shear the firstborn of your sheep.**

**15:19** Sanctify to the LORD: This means to "set apart to the LORD"; the firstborn was to be set apart to God. The firstborn animal was not be used as regular domesticated animal - you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, not shear the firstborn of your flock.

**15:19** All the firstborn males: This was for three reasons. First, because Israel was God's firstborn (Exodus 4:22), and this honored that fact. Second, because the firstborn was thought to be the best, and the best was always given to God. Finally, it was to be a reminder to all generations of when God redeemed Israel, His firstborn.

## **What To Do With The Giving Of The Firstborn – Verses 20-23**

**<sup>20</sup> Each year you and your family are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose. <sup>21</sup> If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. <sup>22</sup> You are to eat it in your own towns. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it, as if it were gazelle or deer. <sup>23</sup> But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water.**

**15:20** You and your household shall eat it before the LORD your God: When the firstborn animal was brought to the tabernacle (or later, the temple) and given to the priests for sacrifice unto the LORD, a portion of the sacrifice went to the family that brought the animal. It was given so that they could eat a joyful ceremonial meal before the LORD.

**15:21** If there is any defect in it: If this was the case, the animal was given to the priests, but not sacrificed unto the LORD - or, it was redeemed for money and the money given unto the LORD.