

“Relating to Life and Death”
Deuteronomy 12:15-16, 12:21-26, 14:1-2, 14:21
December 3, 2023
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti

The Reading of the Word

We continue our series this morning in the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses instructs the people of Israel, as they stand on the verge of the promised land.

Last week, our text called for a little more technical explanation than normal, which I know some of you enjoy, and some of you don't as much. I want to say up front that while it's not as much as last week, this week's texts will require some extra explanation as well. But the payoff is practical and of real spiritual significance, so please do hang in there as we work to get there together. I think it's worth it.

Now, what we're doing this morning began as a sermon on the second half of Deuteronomy 14:21. But as I dug into it, I realized it was best to consider it not only with a few verses from the beginning of chapter 14, but also alongside some verses which we did not say much about back in chapter twelve.

These passages may seem disconnected at first, but I think they actually revolve around a common theme that was very important in the law of Moses and its symbolic system of ceremonial purity.

And so this morning we'll be hearing from selections from Deuteronomy chapters twelve and fourteen.

So please do listen carefully, for this is God's word for us this morning.

Beginning in Deuteronomy 12:15, Moses said to the people:

^{12:15} You may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns, as much as you desire, according to the blessing of Yahweh your God that he has given you. The unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and as of the deer. ¹⁶ Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out on the earth like water.

Then, jumping down to verse twenty-one:

^{12:21} If the place that Yahweh your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock, which Yahweh has given you, as I have commanded you, and you may eat within your towns whenever you desire. ²² Just as the gazelle or the deer is eaten, so you may eat of it. The unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. ²³ Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. ²⁴ You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the earth like water. ²⁵ You shall not eat it, that all may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do what is right in the sight of Yahweh.

Then moving to chapter 14 verse one:

^{14:1} You are the sons of Yahweh your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. ² For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

And finally, moving down to verse twenty-one:

^{14:21} You shall not eat anything that has died naturally. You may give it to the sojourner who is within your towns, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God.

You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let's pray ...

Prayer of Illumination

Lord, we know that those who walk in the ways of your word are blessed –
those who keep your testimonies
and seek you with their whole heart.
Lord, make our ways steadfast
in keeping your statutes.
Keep us from dishonoring your name,
by fixing our eyes now on your word.
Teach us the way of righteousness,
so that we might praise you with upright hearts,
Grant this for Jesus's sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:1-2, 5-7]

Introduction

I've put before you this morning, ten verses, that might seem like an odd group to bring together.

But as I said, I think these verses are united by a common theme that's very important in the Law of Moses and its symbolic system of ceremonial purity.

And the theme that connects all these verses is how we are to relate to life and death.

But before we even unpack that theme, we need to do a quick recap on how we are approaching the ceremonial laws we find in the book of Deuteronomy.

The Meaning of the Ceremonial Law Today

We spent much more time on this last week (and that sermon, titled “Hooves and Holiness” is available on our website if you missed it and want to dig in deeper on this), but we essentially said three things about how we should approach the ceremonial laws of Israel.

The first, is that in many cases we are told that, on the other side of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament ceremonial laws no longer apply to us, in the same literal format that they applied to ancient Israel. The New Testament makes this clear in multiple places.

Second, we said that the ceremonial laws of Israel contained spiritual lessons that God was teaching his people – the law, we read in Galatians 3:24, acted as a guardian and tutor of God’s people until Christ came. As such, the ceremonial law often symbolically enacted important theological and moral truths, for Israel to learn.

Third, for us today, while many of these ceremonial laws have changed in their form or have practically been done away with, ordinarily the lessons they contained in their symbolism remain relevant for us today. And we are called on to learn from them.

And so, the ceremonial laws in these verses no longer apply to us literally. But they contained theological and moral truths in their symbolism that we are still called on to learn from.

And that will be our goal this morning.

The Central Theme of These Texts

And as we do that, what I want to argue, is that what these ceremonial laws all have in common is the theme of how we relate to life and death.

And that’s not too surprising, because, as Jacob Milgrom’s work on Israel’s purity laws highlights, the relationship between life and death is a theme that runs throughout the ceremonial laws of ritual purity.

And one thing that Milgrom points out is that many – not all, as we saw last week, but many – of the laws given to Israel about ceremonial purity (about what is considered ceremonially clean or unclean) is designed to set up a “polarity” – we might say an antithesis or opposition – “between life and death.” In these aspects of the ceremonial law, impurity or uncleanness is associated with death, while ceremonial purity or cleanness is associated with life. Sometimes those associations were quite literal: contact with a human corpse made one unclean. Other times, the links were symbolic, as various things were used by God to symbolize life or death. This system of clean and unclean in the Law of Moses, is meant, as a whole, to teach Israel about how to relate to life, how to relate to death, and how life and death relate to one another. [Milgrom, 1993, 107-111]

And it’s those same themes that underlie and unite our texts this morning.

Taken as a collection, these verses present us with warnings concerning three problematic ways we might be tempted to relate to life and death, and with that they imply three right ways to relate to them.

So what we will see from these verses this morning is that we can be tempted:

- To presume on life,
- To blend life and death,
- Or to despair over death.

To presume, to blend, or to despair, as we relate to life and death.

Our texts this morning push back against those temptations, and as they do, they also suggest biblical alternatives to us.

So, this morning we’ll consider each of those temptations, and the Bible’s alternative to each.

Presuming on Life

The first temptation we see is the temptation to presume on life. And we see this especially in the prohibition against consuming blood.

Take a look at the verses from chapter twelve. The focus here is on how Israel is to relate to the blood of animals.

These verses are talking about common slaughter – the slaughter and butchering of animals for common meals, rather than for special acts of ceremonial worship.

But even in common slaughter described here, God adds a ceremonial stipulation: The people may not consume the blood of the animal. In fact, Deuteronomy 12 is quite emphatic about that.

So, we need to ask: What did this practically mean for ancient Israel, and what is the deeper lesson we are meant to take from it?

First, what did this mean practically, for ancient Israel? It's sometimes assumed that this law is given in reference to pagan practices that are prohibited, but Jacob Milgrom points out there's not really much evidence of pagan practices with blood that this command would be counteracting around ancient Israel.

Others tend to assume that this law was combatting general ancient beliefs that attributed magical powers to blood and ingesting it. But again, Milgrom points out that we do not find special claims of "life" residing in the blood among any of Israel's neighbors – only here in Israel's Scripture.

There's also no comparable prohibition against eating blood from any other culture around Israel in the ancient world that we're aware of.

And so, this law doesn't seem to be Israel adopting or fighting against some other ancient practice, but it seems to be a law God gave to his people simply to instruct them, in and of itself. [Milgrom, 706]

And it's worth noting that the focus is on eating blood, not drinking. The concern is not primarily that Israel would drink blood (though the prohibition certainly included that), but the call was primarily for Israel not to eat meat that still had blood in it [Milgrom, 709].

And so, Israel was not to eat meat that had not been properly drained of blood – the meat and the blood had to be separated before they ate the meat. And the blood was then to be poured out.

This same concept seems to also be at least part of what's behind the first half of Deuteronomy 14:21 – the prohibition against eating animals that died naturally. Draining the blood would normally happen at the time of slaughter. And if an animal was found dead of natural causes, it wasn't as possible to drain the blood properly and thoroughly. And so the blood prohibition is likely one major concern behind the prohibition of eating animals that died naturally. [Block, 350]

So that separation of meat and blood, and abstaining from consuming the blood is, practically, what these verses meant for Israel.

And as we said earlier, these food laws do not apply to us today in the same practical ways.

Now, it is true that in Acts 15:20 and 29 the Jerusalem Council requested that Gentile Christians abstain from blood, and meat with blood in it. But theologians from Calvin to Bavinck to Frame and many others have maintained that the purpose of that request was to help facilitate relationships between Jewish and Gentile believers – not to require observance of the ceremonial dietary laws for all Christian believers. [Bavinck, 321; Calvin, 50; Closson; Douma, 208; Ferguson; Frame, 208, 652; Peterson, 440; Waltke, 159]

The gospel of Mark tells us that in his earthly ministry, Jesus “declared all foods clean.” [Mark 7:19] The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome that when it comes to food, “nothing is unclean in itself” but “everything is indeed clean” [Romans 14:14,20]. And as he wrote to Timothy concerning food, “everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.” [1 Timothy 4:4]

So the Scotts can have their black pudding ... and the Germans can have their blood sausages ... though I may personally choose to pass on both and order Italian instead ...

So, the prohibitions on consuming animal blood in our food no longer apply today as they did to ancient Israel.

That said, these laws still contain a lesson for us to consider. So we need to ask: What is the deeper lesson we are meant to take from it?

And to start to see where the symbolism of this command is pointing, we don’t need to speculate, because we’re told in Deuteronomy 12:23 “the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life.” Blood symbolizes life. This is a restatement from Leviticus 17:11-12 where God says “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, no person among you shall eat blood.” In the sacrificial system of Israel, blood symbolized life. And that symbolism continued into Israel’s common life to teach them about their relationship to life – particularly that life was not theirs to presume upon.

And this ceremonial law went back even to Genesis 9, where Noah and his descendants were similarly instructed by God not to eat meat with the blood still in it [9:4]. There, as humanity was re-established in Noah, God intended to teach his people how to properly relate to life. And in Leviticus and then here in Deuteronomy, God re-establishes and reenforces that symbolic message.

This ceremonial law, we see, was designed to teach God’s people not to claim or presume upon life. And it did that by providing specific instructions for how they handled blood.

Which, in an agricultural setting, would come up more often than we tend to think.

I’ve recently been reading James Rebank’s *The Shepherd’s Life* – a book about literal shepherding in the Lake District of northern England.

And Rebank, who grew up on a family farm, and is now raising his own children on one, writes this – he says:

“Blood was everywhere when I was a child. Sheep lambing, bloody hands, dehorning cattle with blood spurting out of the horn stumps [...] cow caesareans, men with armfuls of guts and blood, then shoving it all back in and stitching it right. [...]

“We accept blood as normal [...]. In traditional communities, blood is part of day-to-day life, something even children are familiar with. [In some cultures] families still often slaughter a goat

in full view of the whole family in a hallway. Middle-class English sensibilities suggest this is somehow in bad taste.

“But I grew up with blood.

“I like blood.

“I would rather my children see blood and know reality than have a childish relationship with farming and food, everything in plastic packaging and everyone pretending it never lived.” [Rebanks, 247-248 (with additional comments added from the audiobook)]

While it’s different from most of our experience today, in the ancient world, in an agricultural community, blood was a day-to-day reality for people.

And so, by highlighting the role of blood, and putting certain restrictions on how people treated that blood, God was putting a lesson in place that Israel would be reminded of somewhat regularly: in their work of raising livestock, but also in their eating – every time they ate meat, this lesson would come up, that while the things that came to them to sustain their lives (including the meat they would eat from animals) – while all those things were good gifts, given to them by God to sustain their lives, they must not presume on life itself: not their own life, not the lives of others, not even on the life of animals. Because all life is from God and belongs to God.

It’s an obvious fact that we can easily overlook that even animal life is an incredible miracle. Life ... especially conscious life – even in animal form – is an astounding thing. As philosopher Thomas Nagel has pointed out, the most sophisticated explanations of our world from secular science are still unable to adequately explain what consciousness is, how it exists in the world, and where it came from. But conscious life is one of the most obvious and astounding things we can see in the universe – even in animal form. [Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos*]

And God called on humans to recognize that, all the way back in the days of Noah, by symbolically returning the life – the blood – of every animal to God, rather than consuming it themselves.

Now, both in Genesis and here in Deuteronomy, the Lord graciously gives animals to humanity as food. And that’s a wonderful gift. But even as he does, by the blood prohibition and its symbolism, he reminds Noah and then Israel that even as we receive food from animals, we are not to forget that their life comes from God, belongs to God, and is not simply ours to presume upon.

There are implications in this for how we treat animals. Animal life is not the same as human life – that is clear. Animals are given to humanity as food, we see that here too. But that does not give humanity a license to be cruel towards animals. Christians shouldn’t be comfortable with industrial farming practices that cause unnecessary pain and suffering for animals in the name of efficiency, because even animal life belongs ultimately to God, and, as Proverbs 12:10 puts it: “Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.”

The blood regulation reminds us that all life comes from God and belongs to God ... and that has implications for how we treat animals, and we should take that to heart. [As Herman Bavinck put it in his *Reformed Ethics* one hundred years ago: “According to Scripture, killing and eating meat is not impermissible; what is impermissible is torturing and painfully killing animals, and to that degree, animal welfare societies have a legitimate point.” (Bavinck, 320)]

But from the very beginning, the blood regulations we see here were also meant to point beyond animal life.

We see that all the way back in Genesis 9 when it’s first introduced. In Genesis 9:4 God gave Noah the prohibition on consuming animal blood. And then, immediately after that, the Lord declares to

Noah “And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning,” “for,” he explains to him, “God made man in his own image.” [9:5-6]

The connection in Genesis 9, which helps us see the symbolism of Deuteronomy 12, is that if animal life, which does not bear the image of God, is to be treated with such respect in this ritual or separating out the blood, then how much more sacred must human life be, which does bear the image of God?

That’s the point brought out in Genesis 9, and it’s the point a faithful Israelite, who knew Genesis 9, was probably supposed to remember as they followed the ceremonial regulations concerning animal blood. As the ceremonial law reminded them that even animal life belonged to God ... so the Israelite was to remember that human life, which bears God’s image, belongs to God even more.

That’s the deeper lesson of the blood regulations. Humans should not presume on any kind of life, as it is a miracle from God, belonging to God. But they should especially not presume on human life. And as Genesis 9 emphasizes, that means that when it comes to people, we have no right to take the life of the innocent. Because that life belongs to God.

And that biblical truth has real implications for our culture today.

It has implications for the growing practice in our culture of euthanasia – of intentionally taking the life of the infirm. It has implications for abortion – for the intentional destruction of life in the womb. The Bible tells us that all human life, from conception to natural death belongs to God. He gives life. And he takes it away.

Every moment of that life belongs to him. And only he can authorize when it’s permitted for someone to take human life. And he has not permitted it in the case of the innocent.

Protection of the life of the unborn and the elderly is about justice for them as people. But it’s also about God. Because their lives belong to God. And when we take those lives, we presume that we have the authority to take life when we do not.

The underlying lesson of the blood prohibition is that all life belongs to God. And we should not presume on life, whether the life of another or even our own life.

But there’s more ways to presume on human life than just abortion and euthanasia.

Sometimes a good gauge on where our hearts are with this is to consider how we react to things that happen in this world. As Christians, we believe that all human life has incredible worth, and bears the image of God. But we live in a fallen world with violence and injustice. And when we shrug off that violence and injustice, and just accept it, then we cheapen the lives of other people, who are made in the image of God.

When our country or our allies adopt policies or actions that are unconcerned or indifferent to how they lead to the deaths of civilians and innocent people in other nations, that should distress us, because for the sake of national interests, such actions and policies cheapen human life, that is made in the image of God.

When our economic system profits off of exploiting workers living in grinding poverty overseas, that should distress us, because for the sake of profit, such a system cheapens human life that is made in the image of God.

When we read of the deaths of despair in our own country among the rural poor and lower classes, and we catch ourselves shrugging it off, because it doesn't affect us, since, we reason, we're the winners of our culture, and they are the losers ... that should distress us, because on the basis of class, we are cheapening human lives that are made in the image of God.

When we hear of inner-city violence, and how awful it can be to grow up in certain neighborhoods ... but we find ourselves unmoved because the people it affects look different from us ... that should distress us, because on the basis of race, we are cheapening human lives that are made in the image of God.

When we see headlines about violence, or assault, or psychological trauma within our prison system, and we dismiss it since it only affects criminals ... that should distress us, because with such thoughts we are cheapening human lives that are made in the image of God.

We could go on. You know there are people who, when you hear about their mistreatment and the cheapening of their lives ... you kind of shrug it off. But our text reminds us that all life belongs to God, and human life especially so. It bears his image, and no human has the right to unjustly take or to oppress – no human as the right to consume – the lives of others. And when that happens, we should be distressed, and consider if there is some way that we are called to action.

But it's not just about how we feel or respond to how other people are treated. It's also how we steward our own lives.

Your life is a miracle – it's a gift. You're called on to honor it. You have no right to waste it.

In giving you life, the Lord has given you strength. Do you use that strength in ways that glorify him ... or do you consume it for yourself?

In giving you life, the Lord has given you time. Are you using the time he's given you in ways that glorify him ... or are you consuming it for yourself?

In giving you life, the Lord has blessed you with gifts and talents. Are you employing those gifts to honor him ... or are you wasting them away on trivialities?

And in giving you life, the Lord has blessed you with health. Are you careful to maintain and nurture that health – to care for your body – in a way that makes you a good steward of the life God's given you? Or do you presume upon it and let it waste away? And if you think that's not a spiritual question, take a look at Westminster Larger Catechism questions #134-136. The Puritans, almost 400 years ago, took seriously our spiritual calling to steward our physical health.

Now none of this is a call to frantic or constant work. The Bible calls us to rest as well as work, it calls us to feasting as well as fitness. So don't hear what I'm not saying.

But what I am talking about is the temptation to cheapen the life God has given us ... to misuse or not use the gifts of life he's blessed us with.

Your life is not your own. Are you glorifying God with it? Are you offering it to him, just as Israel was called on to offer him the life-blood of animals ... or are you consuming it for yourself – just as they were forbidden from doing?

The blood prohibition is a symbolic call not to presume upon life, but to realize that all life – and human life especially – is a gift from God that is his by right, and we are called on merely to steward it in ways that honor him.

That's the first thing we see in these laws about how we relate to life.

Blending Life & Death

The second temptation we see here, as we relate to life and death, is the temptation to blend them together.

And this is captured symbolically in the second half of Deuteronomy 14:21.

There we find the commandment: "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

Now ... what's going on there?

Once again, while some have argued that this law is a response to a pagan ceremony, we have no evidence for such a pagan practice in the ancient world around Israel. [Milgrom, 737-738]

Instead, what we appear to have here once again are symbolic pictures of life and death, which the ceremonial law of Israel constantly sets in opposition. [Milgrom, 741-742]

But cooking a goat in its mother's milk symbolically blends life and death. The means by which this animal was to be kept alive – its mother's milk – is comingled with the same animal's death. The symbolism in this law is to oppose such a blending.

Life and death could not be blended together. They are not friends, but enemies. This ceremonial law, along with others, was meant to reinforce that truth. And it's a truth our culture desperately needs to remember.

Our culture tells itself, again and again, that death is a natural part of life, that we should accept it as the way things are meant to be, that it's all part of a beautiful circle of life.

But it's noteworthy that we have to be taught this way of looking at human death – we need to be taught to blend human death with human life. Because our gut reaction, from childhood on, is to recoil at human death ... not to embrace it as a natural part of life.

And the Bible affirms our gut reaction. The Bible tells us that human death is an intruder in this world – that the presence of death is not the way things are supposed to be – but that with the rebellion of our First Parents against God, sin and death entered the world as invaders, and their alien presence has remained in this world up until today.

The symbolism of the ceremonial law – including the prohibition against boiling a young goat in its mother's milk – is meant to remind God's people that life and death are set against one another in human life, because death is an intruder in this world.

So the first thing we see is that we must not presume on life, as it is a gift from God and belongs to him.

The second thing we see is that we cannot blend life and death, as human death is an intruder in this world.

Despairing of Death

The third and final temptation we see in these verses is the temptation to respond to all this by despairing in the face of death. And this is what we see in Deuteronomy 14:1. Moses says: “You are the sons of Yahweh your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead.”

When we recognize that death is an intruder in this world – that it’s not the way things are supposed to be – but that it’s still so prevalent ... then we can be tempted towards despair.

Now, the Bible does not speak against grief or mourning. But, as the Apostle Paul puts it, as Christians, we are not to grieve as those who have no hope. [1 Thessalonians 4:13] Despair is grief without hope. The practices of self-cutting for the dead that Moses forbids are practices that express despair in the face of death. And God’s people are not to despair.

But why not?

Why shouldn’t we despair? Death is all around us, death is inevitable for each of us. So why would we not despair over our fate?

The Bible’s answer is that the Lord has delivered us from that fate – he’s delivered us from death.

And to understand how he’s done that, we need to go back to the first thing we considered together this morning: the ceremonial laws concerning blood.

God forbid the consumption of blood for Israel. But then he made one major exception.

On the night in which he was betrayed, the incarnate Lord, Jesus Christ – God in the flesh – took bread and wine. And he told his followers that they were sacramental symbols of his body and blood.

Now, even in that, notice that the body and blood had been separated. This is the concept behind the blood prohibitions – the flesh and the blood were to be separated. It was true in Israel’s common life, but it was even more true in Israel’s worship life, in the sacrificial system of the temple. By identifying the separated elements as his body and blood, Jesus is telling his followers that he himself will be a sacrifice.

And the first thing he does is that he offers his body – his flesh – to his disciples, for them to eat sacramentally. And in a way, that fits. In the peace offering – a regular form of sacrifice for Israel – the flesh of the sacrifice was given to the worshippers to eat. The same was true in the Passover. And so when Jesus said “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you” [Matthew 26:26 Luke 22:19] – the identification of Jesus himself as a sacrifice may have surprised the disciples, but the idea of consuming the body of the sacrifice fit with the expectations of a first-century Jew.

But then Jesus did something truly shocking. He picked up the cup and he said to them “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” [1 Corinthians 11:] And he said to them: “Drink of it, all of you.” [Matthew 26:27]

This was different. This violated the blood prohibition. This was backwards. The ceremonial law was clear – the flesh of a sacrifice could at times go to the worshipper, but the blood, which symbolized the life, always belonged to God, and was to be returned to him.

But when God himself came to earth, though all life here rightly belonged to him ... he offered his life to us. What we had no right to take from others, God gave us from himself. He gave us his life. Because it was the only thing that could defeat death and save us from despair.

In the gospel, God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, offers us his life – he offers us his blood – which overcomes sin and death, and has the power to grant us everlasting life with him, for all eternity.

Spiritually, we receive his life and the power of his blood when we place our trust in Christ and are united to him by faith.

Sacramentally, every Lord's Day, as we gather together, Jesus offers us, at his table, not only his body ... but also his blood. The life is in the blood. And here, in the sacrament, the Lord nourishes us with his life.

And in a sense, the whole blood prohibition is fulfilled in this: that God himself, to whom all life belongs, has come, and he has offered us his life – his blood – so that we might truly have life and be saved. Therefore we don't need blood from anyone else. His blood is sufficient.

That is what he offers us here, sacramentally, at the table every week ... but it's also what he offers us by the Spirit every moment we place our trust in him.

Life comes from God. Death is an intruder that seeks to snatch it away. But we need not despair. Because God has offered us the power of his life in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Let us receive it by faith.

And let us rejoice in the grace of our God.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

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- Theopolis Podcast. Episode 656: "Yahweh's Place of Worship (Deuteronomy 12)." With Peter Leithart, Alastair Roberts, and Jeff Meyers. July 5, 2023. <https://soundcloud.com/user-812874628/episode-656-yahwehs-place-of-worship-deuteronomy-12>

Theopolis Podcast. Episode 662: “Clean and Unclean (Deuteronomy 13-14).” With Peter Leithart, Alastair Roberts, and Jeff Meyers. August 3, 2023. <https://soundcloud.com/user-812874628/episode-662-clean-and-unclean-deuteronomy-13-14>

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Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church’s core value of “Reformed Catholicity”), and also (following the Apostle Paul’s example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.