



Message Transcript

God Values Love and Justice

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Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, we give you all the glory, honor, and praise for who you are. And Lord, we thank you that Lord, every time that your word is opened and that it is faithfully and accurately proclaimed that you speak. So Lord, today I'm asking your help to help me proclaim your word, and Lord, your help in helping us to understand what you have to say. Lord, we believe that every part of your word is true and that it has significance for us to hear. Lord, help us be mindful of all that you want us to understand today. And so now, for all those who have gathered who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what He says and who will by faith put into practice what He shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

When we left off in the Book of Exodus, we were at the Mount of Sinai. What had happened is God had just delivered the 10 Commandments to His people. As they had all gathered around, God had told them, "Do not get too close. If you cross the line, if you go through, you'll be shot through with arrows. You'll be killed because I'm a holy God, but I'm going to tell you what my moral code looks like." And He gave the 10 commandments to the children of Israel, which are binding for all of God's covenant children. The last time we were in the Book of Exodus, we took a look at those 10

commandments, specifically each one, and learned how every single person that's ever breathed or lived has broken all 10 of God's 10 commandments, which is the reason God sent His one and only son Jesus Christ to this world. Because without Him, we would have no hope, because God is holy, He's just, He's righteous, He's true, and He cannot have sin in His presence.

So we learned that the purpose of the law was to show His holiness. It was to reveal our unrighteousness and also show us the need that we have for a savior. At the end of this time, the people begin to tell Moses, "You talk to us. We don't want to hear from Him anymore. I mean, if we listen to God, we're going to die. I mean, God is so powerful." But God doesn't just leave them there. He doesn't just spell out what the 10 Commandments are. He begins to give them examples of how those commandments are to be lived out.

When we fast forward all the way to the New Testament, we learned that all of the law can be summed up by loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and by loving our neighbor as ourself. If we'll honor God in all things and will honor His image bearers, those that He has created, men and women, boys and girls, then we will be the fulfillment of what God requires. And so what we're going to be in today is chapter 21 in the Book of Exodus, and we're actually going to take a look at chapters 21, 22, and part of chapter 23. Here's what I believe as your pastor. I believe that all of God's word is true, and that it's all useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Congregation:

Amen. That's right.

Pastor Jeff:

Okay. That's why you come to Brave. I think there's a lot of places... This may be a sermon you've never heard before and you may never hear again. I think these chapters are ones we could skim over and just say, "Ah, it's about the law and that's good enough. God's just and God's loving and that's it." But we're going to walk through it. We're going to go through it pretty quickly today. So if you have questions on things that I don't hit in the detail that you want, just send me an email. You can send it to askpastorjeff@bravechurch.online. I'll do my best to turn it into a podcast, maybe take it a little deeper.

But if you're here today, what we want to talk about is God's love and we want to talk about God's justice and how both of them come together in the understanding of His law. Now, this law He had given to the children of Israel, we're going to see how this law was fulfilled in Christ. But it's important for us to know that our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, that our God doesn't change, and that the principles which He set forth are still the way in which He operates today.

So I invite you, you're going to need your Bible today. Turn to Exodus chapter 21. We're going to begin, I'm going to break this down in three different areas as we talk about God's love and justice and why God values love and justice. We're going to start with a bunch of principles and precepts today and we're going to end up with the

person of Jesus Christ. So I'm going to invite you in. If you've never been to law school before, this is like an introductory course to law school. We're going to go through this pretty quick, but we're going to highlight three different areas, and the first is this, that God values and loves justice concerning people and privileges. God values love and justice concerning people and privileges.

Let's jump into chapter 21. Here's what God says. He says, "Now these are the ordinances which you are to set before them. So for these next three chapters, he's telling Moses, "Here's what you need to set before my people. They need to see this and they need to know this." And he's going to talk about care for servants or care for slaves. Here's what He says. "If you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve for six years, but on the seventh, he shall go out as a free man without payment. If he comes alone, he shall go out alone. If he is the husband of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons and daughters, the wife and her children shall belong to her master and he shall go out alone. But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out as a free man,' then his master shall bring him to God and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl and he shall serve him permanently."

Now, a couple things we need to talk about before we get started. He's going to talk about male slaves and next he's going to talk about female slaves. And here's what a lot of people are going to say, "God is for slavery. See, He's putting up a way to have slaves." God has not for slavery. God has never been for slavery and God is certainly not for any kind of slavery that ever took place in our nation. What we are

looking at today is case law. He is using circumstances to build a case. Slavery predated the law. People were living as slaves, people had slaves under their care. God is writing regulations for them to be obedient to the law for how to take care of one another. What you're going to see in these sections is how much God cares for the slave and how much God cares for the slave owner and how they are to treat one another.

We could put it in our modern day vernacular, how much God cares for a boss and how much God cares for an employee. But make no mistake about it, God's going to start by talking about slaves. And do you know why? Because God always goes after the marginalized and God always cares for the marginalized and God cares for those that nobody else in society ever cares about. That's why He's talking about it. And so what you're going to see in this text is it's a little different than how we would've understood slavery in our nation and in other places around the world, which was despicable to God and it was passages such as this that allowed William Wilberforce and others to say slavery is wrong and it is.

So here's what God is saying. He's saying if you buy a Hebrew slave, so if you have a slave, he shall serve for six years, but on the seventh he shall go free. In other words, you don't own him forever. On that seventh year, he's not yours. He does not belong to you. He is set free to do whatever he wants. If he has a wife and kids, his wife and kids gets to go with him. If you as the owner gave him a wife and kids came out at that, then you're the one who provided. They're serving you so they can't just leave with him. He would still need to go out by himself.

However, if in the seventh year the slave looks at the master and he says this, "I love my master. He takes great care of me. He takes great care of my wife, he takes great care of my kids. Why in the world would I ever want to go anywhere else? I have everything I need," then you're to take that slave to the priest and then you're to take him to a doorpost and you're to take an awl, which is a leather piercing instrument and drive a spike through his ear, signifying that while he's free to go, he has put himself under your care as a slave. This is where we get the New Testament understanding of bond servant. Paul was free to do whatever he wanted, but he put himself under the care of Jesus as a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is where you get that.

So here's what you see that's different than modern day slavery. The slave has rights. The slave can go free, the slave can be taken care of, the slave can have a wife, the slave can have a kid. And if they are taken care of, the slave can choose to remain a slave. That's what God says. What is he saying? "Take care of the least of these. Take care of the marginalized. You don't own them. You answer to me for how you treat the marginalized." And that's what he says about male slaves. Then He is going to talk about female slaves. Notice verse 7, "If a man sells his daughter as a female slave, she is not to go free as the male slaves do." She doesn't get released on the seventh year.

Now, you might say, "What kind of father would sell his daughter as a slave?" Well, there were a lot of men in that era that would see a man of wealth and say, "It would be better for my daughter, long term, to be a slave under the care of this man

than to marry one of these men over here" so that she was sold as a slave. She did not have the exact same rights. But notice this, it says in verse 8, "If she is displeasing in the eyes of her master," it means the master doesn't really like her or want her, "who designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He does not have authority to sell her to a foreign people because of his unfairness to her." He can't sell her outside of Israel and he's got to take care of her. Why? Because God cares for the least of these. Everybody is created, every human is created in the image of God and nobody had the right to treat somebody with less than dignity.

It says, "If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters." He can't say, "Well, she's a slave so she doesn't get all the same rights as my son would've had if he were to marry a real woman." No, she gets all the same rights as a wife. If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights. If he will not do these three things for her, then she shall go out for nothing without payment. In other words, if he doesn't care for her, she doesn't have to stay. She doesn't get food, she doesn't get clothing, she doesn't get conjugal rights.

Now, some people will read this and say, "Man, God is for polygamy here. He's saying if he takes another wife." Nowhere in the Bible is God for polygamy. As a matter of fact, when Jesus comes on the scene, he goes all the way back to Genesis chapters 1 and 2, so does Paul, to describe that marriage was always designed between one man and one woman till death do you part. But just like in our day in that day, some people pre-law had more than one wife. We say, "Well, that doesn't happen

in our culture." Oh yes, it does. People in our culture marry, they get divorced. They marry another, they get divorced. They marry another. That's serial polygamy. That goes on in our culture all the time. And here's what he's saying. "If you're married, you're married. You care for that person for the rest of your life." That's what he's saying.

He's not promoting a second wife or a third wife. He's saying, "But if you're in a situation where that's the case, that second wife has every single same right as the first wife." Why? Because every single life matters to God and needs to be treated as such. That's what he's saying. He's talking about case law. He's giving an example. What's the principle we can take away from this? We take away the fact that God cares for the marginalized, that every person, no matter how they're treated, that God sees with His eyes. And what should we as believers see? Those who are marginalized and we should care for them knowing that God is watching us.

What else do we see? We see marriage as binding. If you're married, guess what? You are married. "Yeah, but I didn't know that. I mean, I didn't think that." But you're still married. And you get to treat that person with the same dignity that God requires for him or her. Does that make sense? So he values care for servants. Everyone was to be valued.

He continues on, and now we're going to get into some of the capital offenses. God believed in capital offense. Notice what it says. "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. But if he did not lie and wait for him, but God let him fall into His hand, then I will appoint a place which he may free. If however, a man acts

presumptuously towards his neighbor so to kill him craftily, you are to take him even from my altar that he may die." Here's what God says, "If you kill somebody else and it's in a premeditated way, you give your life for that person." Why? Because God thinks capital punishment is good. That's what he says. So if you premeditatedly kill somebody, then you should be killed too.

If however, you killed somebody accidentally, it's involuntary manslaughter, didn't mean to do it, God set up cities of refuge where you could run, hang on to the altar and say, "I didn't mean it. It was an accident. This just kind of happened." And if you pledge your case and that was true, then you would be free. However, if it turns out you were lying and you had planned that murder, they could drag you away from the altar and kill you too. You say, "Well, where's the love in that?" There's great love in that because God values all people. Oftentimes we only think about the person who is going to be killed. What about the one who was killed? What about if it was your family member that was killed? What do you want? Justice. God says, "I'll give you justice." Life for life. That's what I say."

So if you premeditatedly kill somebody, you're going to be killed too. Do you know that has a curbing appeal to society? I mean, "If you're going to take your kids out on a Saturday morning to see people standing on the gallows before they're ready to be hung and you say to your little boy or little girl, "You kill somebody, that's what's going to happen to you. Don't kill people." Do you know it has a way of curbing it?

Congregation:

Yes.

Pastor Jeff:

See, we live in a society where we think justice is supposed to be restorative. Justice is to be punitive. When you face God, you will not face him in your sin and face a restoring God. You will face a punitive God if you die in your sins. That's what God was saying. "I love people. I care for people, but I'm also a God of justice too." That's what he says.

So that was one for capital offense. How about this one? Verse 15. Children, pay attention. "He who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death." Verse 17, "He who curses his father and mother shall surely be put to death." How serious does God take the family? There is no case anywhere that I've ever read where a kid got put to death for striking his parents and trying to kill them or cursing them.

Now, let's be clear, I don't believe what he's saying here is when a kid gets mad at his parents and yells, "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" Otherwise, every kid would be killed at some point in their life, right? He's talking about an intent to hurt them and kill them. You try to kill your parents, you're going to lose your life. You curse your parents, you talk bad about your parents, it's ongoing, you want them to have bad things happen to them, that's a capital offense. That's how serious God takes the family. That's how serious God takes authority in the home. Why? Because God knows that the building block of any great nation or culture is always based upon the foundation of a solid family. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

So it's a capital offense for kids to try to kill their parents or curse them. How about this one that we skipped over in verse 16? "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells them or he is found in His possession, shall surely be put to death." So kidnapping. You steal a kid, whether that kid's in your possession or whether you've stolen him and given him away, that deserves death as well. Why? Because God cares for kids. God cares for children. God loves them. His love brings forth His justice. There were capital offenses for that, for premeditated murder, for violence or cursing your parents, or for kidnapping.

What does he say about physical injury? Now, notice this. "If men," verse 18, "have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or his fist and he does not die but remains in bed, if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished." Now watch this. "He shall only pay for his loss of time and shall take care of him until he is completely healed." Men, you get in a fight with somebody, you strike somebody with a stone, you punch them, they don't die, I mean they're able to get up, they're able to walk around, but they can't work. Guess who's paying their disability? You are. How long do you have to pay it? Until they are completely healed. Why? Because every single life matters to God. And if you had the responsibility to get in the fight, you have the responsibility to walk until they're

completely healed. That's what it means.

I mean, do you see God's care for people? Do you see God's care for the marginalized? Do you see how he sets boundaries? Now, why does he have to settle this stuff up? He sets it up for the same reason that you parents set things up. Even when your parents make super clear statements, curfew is at 11:00 and your kid comes in at 11:30 and then they begin to debate with you, but you don't understand, "So-and-so was doing this and so-and-so did that, or there was a traffic accident. It was this." That's case law. We're going to take a look at that case and see if you have a case. It's not just the law, it's how does it apply to the bigger hole of what we're trying to accomplish?

I mean, you see it with slavery. If God would've said to the slave owners, "Yeah, just kick people out. You can't have slaves. Let them go." That would not have been good for the slave. How would they have made a living? How could they have had anything? It would've not been good for the slave owner who was earning his living through those who are helping him. So he builds cases around those things so that both groups of people are helped in a way that honors God. He does this with murder. He does this with everything so that people know that the heart of God is to be honored and that the heart of God is to see that all people get treated fairly and are loved.

Notice this, verse 20. "If a man strikes his male or female slave with a rod and he dies at his hand, he shall be punished," which means he's going to suffer vengeance. If you kill a slave, you can't kill a slave. You're going to be punished for killing a slave.

They don't belong to you. They're not your property. People belong to God. "If however he survives a day or two, no vengeance shall be taken for he is property." In other words, if you punish your slave with a rod but that slave lives but is out of commission for a couple days, you're losing their ability to earn you income. That's your loss, right? That's what he says.

Notice what he goes on to say. Verse 22. "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely..." You see it? "Two men get in a fight and a woman who's pregnant gets in the middle of it and she gets struck and she gives birth prematurely, yet there's no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him and he shall pay as the judges decide." Two men get in a fight, woman who's pregnant gets punched, she goes into delivery early. The baby's delivered, the baby's healthy, the mom is healthy. I as the husband can say, "You hit my wife and here's what I demand, and the judges can make you pay what I demand. You don't have to give your life for that, but you do give remuneration for the fact that you hit my wife and she went into labor prematurely and you could have killed my kid."

But notice what happens if that's not the outcome, "But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty. Life for life. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. Hand for hand. Foot for foot. Burn for burn. Wound for wound. Bruise for bruise." Now, what does this mean? What does it mean in the eye for an eye? It means that God wanted to set up punitive measures that did not give excessive leniency or extreme severity. Now, if you kill somebody, you're going to give your life. If you scratch

somebody, you're going to get scratched. I mean, the punishment needs to fit the crime. So in this situation with the woman who goes into labor, if she goes into labor early and that child dies, you're going to give your life for that. Why? Because a baby in utero is still a life that you killed.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Do you see that god hasn't changed, right? That's God's heart. God's heart is protecting the innocent, the marginalized. God cares about life. Why? Because we learn in Genesis chapter 1 that every single human being, Christian or none, is an image bearer of God and how they are treated is a reflection of your theology. How you treat the marginalized and how you care for people and how you take care of others is a direct reflection on who you believe that God is. And here's what God says, "Love everyone. Take care of everyone." He's setting up these statues for Israel so there's not like, "Well, he's my brother," or "He didn't mean to do it," or "He didn't did." And so, a life was taken, but why don't you just fine him \$10? Or that it becomes excessive when he does something that's not that big of a deal where you want to kill him?

God was setting up His punitive system so that the crime met the punishment. Why? Because God is so loving and God is so just. That's who God is. He's perfect in His justice and He's perfect in His love. We'll go through these here at the end. This is

really where we're starting to see some culpable neglect. Notice this. "If a man strikes the eye of his male or female slave and destroys it, he shall let him go free on account of his eye. And if he knocks out a tooth of his male or female slave, he should let him go free on account of both." What's he saying? I mean, if you're not giving a punitive measure like a rod to the back, but you're not going to be violent with your slave, you punch his eye and he can't see anymore, you knock his tooth out, that slave can go. Why? Because the slave has rights because the slave belongs to God.

You can't treat people poorly based upon their position. You are called to love all people equally. That's why when Jesus says, "Do unto others the way you would have them do unto you. Love them. I command you to love. That's how you're fulfilling the law." Notice this. This is where we get into some of that culpable neglect. Verse 28 talks about an ox. We have cars. We don't have oxen, right? Most people in this era were farmers. It wasn't uncommon for a lot of them to have more than one ox or more than one donkey. And notice what he says. "If an ox gores a man or woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished."

So if you have an ox and that ox wanders around and ends up killing a neighbor, you have to put that ox down. Now, that may not sound like a big deal, but that's your property, that's your livelihood, that's your tractor, so to speak, that's pulling your load. You have to put that down and nobody can eat it. I mean, you can't use it for food or anything because it killed somebody else. That ox has to die. But notice what it says as it continues. Let's assume for the sake of argument, if however, an ox was

previously in the habit of goring its owner and the owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner shall be put to death.

So if you have an ox that is known to go out and has a history of wanting to go after people and gore them and you don't take responsibility for your property and that ox gets out and kill somebody, we're killing the ox and we're killing you because you knew better and you didn't take care of what you needed to take care of.

Do you see how God's just? Do you see how what he's saying is fair? Do you see how he's talking about that there's personal responsibility for the things that you own and that it belongs to you and you need to take ownership of the things that happened because of it? It's as if a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him. In other words, God gives a caveat here. You let that animal out and you knew it had the history of doing it and it killed somebody, you can plead for a fine and the judges can say, "Okay, here's an extensive fine" and you can pay that, so there was a way out of it. It says this, "Whether it gores a son or a daughter, it shall be done to him according to the same rule."

I find this next verse really interesting. If you're following along in your Bible, you'll find this interesting too. "If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his or her master 30 shekels of silver and the ox shall be stoned. So if a male or female slave is killed, the slave owner gets 30 shekels of silver. Do you know why?

Because 30 shekels of silver is what a dead slave was worth. Fast forward to the New Testament. What did Judas Iscariot sell Jesus out for?

Congregation:

[inaudible 00:25:42].

Pastor Jeff:

30 shekels of silver. What was Jesus? He he got paid the dead slave's wage. Anyone who wants to be great must be a servant and the greatest will be what? Slave of all. That was the blood price for the dead slave Jesus who came to die on our behalf. Isn't that interesting?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

That's what the call was in verse 32. He continues in verse 33, "If a man opens a pit, so you open a pit and digs a pit and does not cover it over and an ox or donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restitution. He shall give money to its owner and the dead animal shall become his." So if you own an ox or donkey, I dig a pit. I didn't tell you about it. I didn't give you signs or warning and your animal fell in, I got to pay you for that animal. I get the dead animal, but you get the money so you can go get another animal.

Verse 35. "If one man's ox hurts another so that it dies, then they shall sell the

live ox and divide its price equally and also they shall divide the dead ox." So my ox kills your ox, your ox is dead. We get to split that ox and I have to give you the ox that I have. We have to sell that and we split the proceeds of the one that was alive. Or if it was known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its owner has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox. And the dead animal shall become his. So if I knew it had the ability to go out and gore and I didn't do anything and my ox killed your ox, then you get the dead animal and you get mine too. I lose my ox.

Do you see what God's setting up here? I mean, this is why you haven't heard a sermon on this probably in your entire life and may never again because it's tedious case law. But do you see how God cares for the marginalized? Do you see how he loves all people? Do you see how he sees that all people have value? Do you see how he's watching to ensure that all people are taken care of with his love? Do you see that God is just and he's right to do the right thing even if it doesn't feel right to other people? That's who our God is. That's the one that we're going to stand before someday.

So God values love and justice concerning people and privileges. Let me tell you a second one. God values love and justice concerning possessions and property as well. God values love and justice concerning possessions and property. You still following along? You're doing good? You came to church to learn something today, didn't you? All right, we're we're going to do this.

Notice this. It says, "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall pay five oxen for the oxen, four oxen for the sheep." There's remuneration.

You can't just steal somebody something and not give it back. Here's what I would say today. You steal something from somebody, pay them back four or five times as much. Isn't it interesting when Jesus led Zacchaeus to the Lord, what did he say? "Lord, here now I give half my possessions to the poor. And if I've wronged anybody, I'll pay them back four times as much." Where does he get that? From the law. He's paying them back for what he stole. That's what he's saying.

Now notice this, these next verses would fall under what we would call today like castle doctrine or castle law. It says if a thief is caught while breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there will be no blood guiltiness on his account. Somebody transgresses your property and comes into your house and you kill them, God says, "That's okay." I think that's okay too. But notice what happens. He says, "But if the son has risen on him," it means the next morning the son comes up and the guy's still alive, "there will still be blood guiltiness on his account. He shall surely make restitution. If he owes nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft."

In other words, if he survives the night and he doesn't get killed, he's still guilty and he still has to pay back four or five times as much. And if it turns out he didn't steal as much as you thought, you can sell him, right? Why? Because stealing is wrong. You can't steal from other people. That's what God says. All stealing is wrong. Stealing from other people is wrong. Stealing from your boss is wrong. Stealing at work is wrong. Stealing from your friends is wrong. Taking things that nobody knows that you took without permission is wrong 100% of the time. That's God's standard.

Notice what he says here in verse 5. We're talking about property damage now.

"If a man lets his field or vineyard be grazed bare and lets his animal loose so that it grazes to another man's field," in other words, the animal can't find food on his field so he goes to another one, "he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard." In other words, that animal leaves your property and goes and eats everybody else's. How do you make restitution? With the best you have. You're not going to give scraps back to your neighbor like, "Hey, I'm sorry my animal ate all your crops, but here's some stuff." No, you give the best back because you're sorry that your animal took their stuff. In other words, when you hurt other people's property, give them back even more than what you took. I mean, that's the principle here. Care for others in a way that you would want to be cared for yourself.

Notice what he says in verse 6 talking about fire. "Fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes so that stacked grain and the standing grain of the field is consumed. He who started the fire shall surely make restitution." If you ended up starting a fire, it accidentally got started on your property and ended up burning down all their crops or their livestock or their barns or whatever, then you take it under your condition to make sure they have everything that they need. Pay them back. If you hurt somebody else's property, pay them back. If you get in a car accident and total their car, make sure that you have insurance. And if you don't, pay them back. You are responsible for other people's property if you're the one that caused the damage. Has God's heart changed? No, he still cares about other people.

How about this in verse 7? Now we're talking about safe deposits. It's having

other people keep some of your stuff. If you borrow things from other people and you keep it safe for them, notice what it says. "If a man gives his neighbor money or goods to keep for him and it is stolen from the man's house, if the thief is caught, he shall pay double." So somebody has you watch their animal and while you're watching the animal, the thief comes and steals the animal. If the thief is caught, he's culpable. He's going to have to pay back double of what he took. If the thief is not caught, then the owner of the house shall appear before the judges to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property.

In other words, you let me borrow your ox. The ox is gone. "Bro, I didn't do anything with your ox. I don't know where the ox is. It wasn't me.' I can plead my case before the judges and they can say, "He didn't mean to do it. It was accidental." For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox or a donkey, sheep, clothing or any lost thing about which one says "This is it," the case of both parties shall come before the judges, he whom the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor. So the judges would stand there and decide who was right and who was wrong. And whatever the judges decide, God said, that's what you must do.

Do you see why in Exodus chapter 18 when Moses was standing all day with all the people dealing with all the problems, this is what he did all day long? And when Jethro, his father-in-law, was watching him saying, "Bro, you are going to wear yourself out. Teach people the statutes. Have them settle these things." That's why he delegated to do that, because this would've been painstaking to have 2 million

Israelites line up day after day, all day long to deal with every little issue, right? That's why our courts are filled with all sorts of little issues all the time, right? But whatever the judge decided, that's what you had to do. God says you need to listen to the judge.

He continues. He says, "If a man gives his neighbor a donkey or an ox or a sheep or any animal to keep for him and it dies or is hurt or is driven away, while no one is looking, an oath before the Lord shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property and its owners shall accept it and he shall not have to make restitution." In other words, "I did everything I could. I don't know what happened. It wasn't me. It wasn't my family. I didn't see what happened. Your animal ran away. It wasn't me." No problem. That just happens sometimes. But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its owner. If I say, "Bro, I didn't take care of it. It got stolen." I'm still responsible if we can't find the thief.

If it is torn to pieces, let him bring it as evidence. He shall not make restitution for what has been torn to pieces. "Hey, look, wild animal got your animal. I didn't have anything to do with it. I couldn't protect it. Let me show you what happened." If a man borrows anything from his neighbor and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make restitution. If its owner is with it, he shall make restitution. If it is hired, it came for hire. In other words, if I paid you to use something of yours, I paid you to use your ox, I've already paid you for it and the ox died while I was using it, I've already paid you for it. I mean that's that's part of what I paid for. If however, I borrowed your ox, I didn't pay you anything and the ox dies, I'm responsible.

What is God saying here and all of these tricky things? If you borrow things from

somebody else, you're responsible for what you borrow. And if you borrow it, it means you better return it in as good a shape or better shape than what it was borrowed in. Or you better say, "I don't want to borrow it because that's your property. You keep it." Right? Or you make a deal to say, "Listen, I'm watching it, but I'm not responsible for anything that would happen to it." Sometimes when people want to give me a book, I'll tell them this. "If you give me this book, you will never see it again." So make sure it's a gift. Don't let me lend it because you won't see it. You need to know that upfront, right?

We need to take care of people's things when we borrow their things. If you borrow their car, return it with gas. If you borrow their car, return it clean. If you borrow things from others, take care of other people's things. Why? Because property matters to God. Possessions that you have matter to God. We like it when people take care of our property and possessions. And God's just saying... So He put it into law so Israel would know how to handle that.

So God cares about love and justice concerning people and privileges. He cares about love and justice concerning possessions and property. Let me give you a final one here. You hanging with me? All right, we're getting there. God values love and justice concerning principles and priorities. Principles and priorities. In your Bible, it may say something like sundry laws. Sundry means various or diverse. All sorts of different things we're going to see now, and he cares about all these.

The first we're going to see is sexual seduction. Notice this. It says, "If a man

seduces of virgin, that's an unmarried woman who is not engaged and lies with her, he must pay a dowry for her to be his wife." That's a bride price to the father. "If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the amount of the dowry for virgins." So if there's a man and he is pursuing a woman who is not engaged to anybody else, and in the course of pursuing her, they come together and have sexual relations, he owes the father a price for his daughter.

Now the father can come in and say, "No, no, no, no. I don't care what you're going to pay me. You're still going to pay me, but you're not going to have my daughter because you're no good for her," right? Which tells us this. Fathers, you should be involved in whom your children marry. Dads, if you have daughters, I have two of them, don't let them marry the first jamoke that just comes down the pipe, right? That's what it's saying. It's saying, "Dads, you have a responsibility to make sure your daughter's marry well. And if you don't want her to get married, she doesn't have to get married." That's what it's talking about.

And by the way, if you're dating somebody and you're not married to somebody, let me tell you what she's not. She is not your property and you don't own her. She belongs to God and to that family, and you better make sure you treat her well, right? That's what it's saying. Before I get fired up, we'll pause there for a bit. All right. But that's what he's saying. He's saying, "Hey, why?" Because young girls matter to Jesus. They do.

Notice what verse 18 says, now we're getting into idolatry. Remember the first commandment? You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him only. Notice what

it says. "You shall not allow a sorceress to live." Fortune tellers, those that channel demons, God says, "Kill them." Why? "Because they're going to pollute my whole nation of people. If they're not pursuing me, and worse yet, they're going to pursue other gods and demon activity and be sorcerers and sorceress, take their life. They have no part of the covenant community of Israel." That's what God says. Why? Because God cares about His own worship. He says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve me only. I am the Lord. That is my name. I will not share my glory with others or give my praise to idols."

Notice what he says in verse 19. "Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death." In the Canaanite religion, bestiality, that's what that was called with a human and an animal, totally formed everything God created. Now, it seems strange that in... What is it now? 2023. It seems strange in 2023, we'd have to talk about that, but I'm just watching the news enough to know there's going to be people that pretty soon are going to come on the air that tell you how they're in love with their cow or their dog or their cat and how they're going to get married. That's bestiality. It's wrong every single time.

Marriage is between one man and one woman till death do your part according to the word of God. God says, "Bestiality? No. None." So they should be put to death as well. "He who sacrifices to any other God than the Lord alone shall surely be put to death." Does God take His holiness serious?

Congregation:

Yes.

Pastor Jeff:

What did he tell the covenant community of Israel? He says, "If there's sorcerers, if there's people that are serving other gods, if there are people that are bestiality, it would be better to kill them than to let them live and be perverse and take others off the course of my great name because I'm worth it." That's how serious God is. Now, we look at that and say, "How could God kill somebody like that?" Friends, I'm going to tell you that each and every day people die by the hundreds per second. Those that die in their sin, that's the God that they're standing before. It's a horrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God with your sins unforgiven. Make no mistake about it, God is not going to restore those who are dead in their sin. God is going to punish those for eternity who are dead in their sins. That's why God is so clear about how he wants to be worshiped today.

That's why it's important that you go to a church that honors the Lord Jesus Christ, that preaches the whole council of His word, that worships him and Him only. The New Testament says to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, so don't go killing pastors that aren't for Jesus. But here's what it says, if they're not giving the full allegiance and honor to God, get out of that church as fast as you can and go find one where Jesus Christ is getting 100% of the allegiance because that's what God demands. Amen? That's what he's saying.

All right, I'm getting excited now. All right, from idolatry, let's talk about care for

the needy in verse 21. You're hanging with me, you're doing great. We're almost there. It says, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him for you are strangers in the land of Egypt." How long were they strangers in the land of Egypt? About 430 years. He said, "How could you treat a stranger poorly when you were a stranger for 430 years? When I was the only one that took care of you, how could you treat other people like that when that's where you came from?" Here's my principle. Here's what I think God is saying. "Don't forget from where you come from."

Christians, don't forget what it was like when you were a nonbeliever, living like a nonbeliever and acting like one. Don't treat nonbelievers poorly just because they're acting like nonbelievers. That's what nonbelievers do. Love them. Have compassion for them. Show mercy for them. Love them enough to tell the truth to them because they weren't built in God's image.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

It says, "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan." A widow is one who has lost their spouse to death and an orphan is one who doesn't have any parents. Does God care about widows and orphans in the New Testament? 100%. James 1:27 says that pure religion is this, that you take care of widows and orphans. If you want to know the heart of God, it's for the marginalized that can't take care of themselves. God still cares about the widows and the orphans. So don't afflict widows and orphans. Why?

Verse 23 says, "If you afflict him at all and he does cry out to me, I'll surely hear his cry and my anger will be kindled and I will kill you with the sword and your wives will become widows and your children fatherless."

He said, "If you don't take care of the widows and you don't take care of the orphans," here's what God said to His covenant community of Israel, "I'll kill you. Then your wife will know what it's like to be a widow and your kids will know what it's like to be orphans." In other words, "I take widows and orphans seriously. Take care of the marginalized. Help those who are having a hard time helping themselves." He says in verse 25 regarding lending money. He says, "If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him. You shall not charge him interest." He then goes on to say, "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it before the sun sets." In other words, "Don't profit from interest off my people." Lend money? Lend it, but don't profit off of it. Some of you are going to take a pledge of a cloak? That's the outer garment of a person. When night comes, that's the only way that person can keep warm. Give it back to them.

"Don't hold things over my people." What does it mean as Christians? As Christians, we should be the most kind, giving, luxurious, extravagant givers to other Christians that are in need in our community.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

That's what it means. That's the principle here, right? He goes on to say this, "For that is his only covering, that is his cloak for his body. What else is he going to sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to me, I will hear him for I am gracious." Notice this, "You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people." How about that?

Now we can pause there for about three weeks. Don't curse God. Don't say bad things about God. Yes, we all go through seasons where it's difficult. Yes, we all go through seasons where we can question God's goodness to us, but it doesn't change the fact that God is always good to us. Don't curse him. Don't say, "God, where are you?" Don't say, "You're no good." God is good whether you're feeling it or not. The fact that you're breathing today, blinking today, if you ate today, every good thing that happened in your life today already is because God blessed you. If you slept last night, that was a blessing from God. Don't curse God. Nor what? Nor curse a ruler of your people. Don't curse rulers of our people. Don't curse pastors. Don't talk bad about pastors. Don't talk bad about your spiritual leaders. Don't talk bad about your small group leaders. Don't talk bad about other people in the church.

Don't talk bad about political leaders. You can disagree with them. I find myself frequently doing that. You can have a discussion about the facts that you disagree with, but you don't curse another person because that other person was created in the image of God. It's so easy to join social media and everybody else is bearing false witness and think you're just being godly to put other people down, but it's atrocious to God to talk bad about somebody that he created in His image that he sent His son

Jesus to die for. Stop it. That's what he says. Amen? I'll take the golf clap. Okay.

I know that hits home because we see things from people that are making decisions that we don't like and we think it's our job to tell everybody else and promote all. It's not. Go to God with it. Cry out for justice to God. Ask God to show them the same kind of mercy that he's shown to you. Ask God to write every wrong because he promises that he will, but don't you go around being the bad mouth of everybody else. Amen?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

How about verse 29? Stay here for a few weeks. "Do not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborns of your son you shall give to me." What's God saying? "Your grains and your wine, the first fruits of everything you have, bring to me. Not your leftover scraps. I want your first and your best. When you get a paycheck, you bring me the best part first. I want to know that you're bringing me the best first. When it comes to your sons and when it comes to your animals, you shall do the same with oxen and with your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days. And on the eighth day, you shall give it to me. You shall be holy men. Therefore, you shall not eat any flesh torn to pieces in the field. You shall throw it to the dog." So flesh that was eaten by animals, the blood was still in it, they were considered unclean. You can get disease, get rabies. Don't eat it. What was he saying before that? He's saying, "Your

firstborn sons belong to me. Dedicate them."

It's the reason Jesus was dedicated on the eighth day in the temple. Why? Because your firstborn son belongs to God. That's what he told the people of Israel. "And the firstborn of all your offspring belongs to me. Let it stay with its mother for eight days. On the eighth day, you bring it to me and sacrifice it to me." Why? "Because I'm worthy of everything that you have. And I want to know that I get your first and not your scraps." How does it translate today? It translates like this. When you come to worship God, bring your best. Bring your best heart before Him. Bring your best worship before Him. Bring your best financial gifts before Him. Bring all that that first before Him. Don't give God your scraps. Don't give God your leftover time and your leftover money and your leftover resources. Like, "No, I want all the best first because I want to know that I'm priority in your life." That's the principle. This is what he was teaching the covenant nation of Israel.

And then he finally gets down into these final sundry laws, these first nine verses of 23, which is where we'll end where he talks about legal justice. And just listen to this. He says, "You shall not bear false report. Do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice." What's he saying? Always tell the truth. Always tell the truth. Do not follow the multitudes of liars. You always tell the truth. If it costs you, tell the truth. If it costs somebody that you love, you tell them the truth. You never ever waiver from the truth. And all God's people said...

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

It's easy to say. It's hard to live, especially when it's somebody that you love, that if you tell the truth it could cost them. "Nor be partial to a poor man in his dispute." Show no partiality. Whether somebody's rich or poor, you tell the truth. Notice how he says to take care of your enemy's possessions. If you meet your enemy's ox... I find that kind of funny. If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him. You shall surely release it with him. If you have somebody that hates you, they talk bad about you, they say all things are evil and you see their ox wandering away, you can't be like, "Okay, see you later." You take that ox and you return it to him.

You see their donkeys falling under a cart and say, "Man, wish that was your master, but that second best thing." No. You release the cart from the donkey. You release. Why? Because God cares about all people and he cares about all their possessions and he cares about all their property. And if it's in your ability to do good, you do good to them even if they've been poor to you. Is that principle still apply today? It must certainly does. Love your enemies. That's how you show love. Pray for those who persecute you. That's what Jesus said to do.

Notice verse 6, "You shall not pervert the justice due to your needy brother in

dispute." Just because you have a brother, someone that you love, family member or church member, do not pervert justice. Do not lie to help him out. "Keep far from a false charge and do not kill the innocent or the righteous for I will not acquit the guilty." Babies in utero are innocent. People that kill them are guilty.

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

People that don't stand up for the right of the unborn are guilty, not before man, but before God. The God of the universe, the one that's writing all this, don't kill righteous people. He will not acquit the guilty. "You shall not take a bribe." This should be on every wall at Congress. "You shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear sighted and subverts the cause of the just." Don't take a bribe. If you take a bribe, you won't see clearly. "Do what is right before God," is what He says. "You shall not oppress a stranger since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you are also strangers in the land of Egypt." And he repeats what he says.

Now, we've spent about 50 minutes going through two and a half chapters of God's word, and you may wonder, "Why in the world did I even come to church today? What is this all about? It's all about this. That the God that you say that you love and the God that you want to serve is completely just and righteous and He is completely loving, and that He cares for himself and He cares for others. That's why Jesus summed up the law in saying this, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,

soul, mind, and strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself." This sums it all up. Some of you may say, "Well, that's all we needed to know. That would've saved us 50 minutes."

But here's why I taught you this. When Jesus came to the world, here's what he said about this very law. In the greatest sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, here's what he said. Matthew 5:17, "Do not think I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until it is accomplished. Whoever then knows one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes in the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Did Jesus come to abolish the law? Did he take the law away? Is the law gone? No. And woe to those who teach that it is. The law is the law. It does not change. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. That's why Jesus begins to explain the law. "You've heard it said this, but I tell you this." And there's nothing that he does to make the law less binding, he only makes it more binding. "You've heard it say, 'Do not kill.' I tell you, don't even think that your brother's an idiot. You've heard it say, 'Do not commit adultery.' I tell you, if you even look loosely upon a woman that's not your wife, you've committed adultery in your heart." I mean, he's expanding and he's expounding on law.

How can we pitch the law and say, "That's no good"? That's the God you're going to stand before someday. And if you're paying attention, you're realizing, "Wow, I can't keep all this." And you're right. You're right. That's why God sent His son Jesus. Jesus had to come and fulfill the law so he could do something because if Jesus hadn't fulfilled the law, His death on the cross would not have counted for anything. If he had broken just one of the laws, His death on the cross did not count for anything. But He fulfilled the law.

Romans 5:6-8 says, "For while we were still helpless at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for a good man, someone might even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Congregation:

Yes, amen.

Pastor Jeff:

It says in Romans 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to everyone who believes." You see Christ fulfilled the law in us and is working it out in and through us. Jesus came because he didn't throw away the law. He was accused that he didn't keep the law, but he kept every jot and tittle of the law. He fulfilled the law perfectly, which neither you nor I could do. And when he went to the cross, he was offering himself up in complete love for the world and in complete justice to His father, love and justice meet at the cross. It was Jesus saying, "It is finished. I've fulfilled the

law. I've taken care of what you couldn't do for yourself. Father, forgive them. They do not know what they do."

And in perfect justice, God the Father poured all His wrath out on His son and Jesus Christ died and all the sin of the world was paid for. Three days later when he rose from the dead validating he was indeed God's one and only son, guess what took place then? He began to offer life to everyone who had transgressed God's law and said, "While you can't get to God, I am God and I came for you."

Do you want to be completely forgiven? Do you want to know that in Christ is the fulfillment of the law so that when you stand before God and the law books are opened, you can say this, "Through the blood of Jesus, it is all fulfilled in me because Christ is my personal Lord and Savior." Isn't that awesome?

Congregation:

Amen.

Pastor Jeff:

Because if you stand before the God I'm telling you about today without repenting and trusting Jesus Christ alone, you have no hope but the justice of God who will cast you into an eternity in hell where there is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth. But I'm here to tell you, God loved you so much that God the Father sent His son to be the Savior of the world. God wanted you to be in relationship with Him. God wanted to forgive you of all your transgressions. Knowing how substantial and weighty the law is, is what shows us His holiness, our unrighteousness, and our need for the

Lord. Why not make today the day you make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?

Amen?

Would you stand with me? Father in heaven, we give you praise, glory, honor, and thanks. We thank you for your law, that it's perfect, it's righteous, it's holy, it's good, and yet we confess we've kept none of it. God, thank you for your love and mercy which comes through your justice.

If you're here today and you've never trusted in Jesus, here's how you can pray. Lord Jesus, I know I'm a lawbreaker, but I believe you died for all my sin. And right now I want to turn for my sin and place my full trust in you as my Lord and savior. Come into my life and be my Lord today. And if you do belong to Christ, would you just begin to thank Him in your heart right now? That the great I am lives inside of you. And what you couldn't do for yourself, he is now beginning to fulfill in and through each and every one of you. God, we give you praise, glory, honor, and thanks. May you be worshiped here today as King of kings and Lord of Lords. In Jesus name, amen and amen. Can we give God praise this morning?