

## **EXODUS 23:1-9 (JUSTICE, JUSTICE YOU SHALL DO)**

In the Gentile-led New Testament church, the words of Paul are our marching orders. They are where we are to get our doctrine and they are what we need to know in order to live rightly in this dispensation of time; the dispensation of grace.

The utter confusion of people concerning simple precepts like salvation by grace through faith without adding in works, eternal salvation, and the law being set aside in Christ are almost foreign to the multitudes who sit in churches around the world.

By understanding that Paul is where our doctrine comes from, we can then rightly know how to conduct ourselves at the point we are at now in redemptive history. Having said that, this doesn't mean that we can't learn anything from the law. Rather, the law shows us many wonderful precepts that we probably should follow.

Being in Christ means that we won't be judged for not doing these things. Yes, the law is set aside in Christ. But they are still things which hold value for society and for our interactions with others. Today's verses are literally filled with common sense items which, if adhered to, would alleviate many of the problems of our society.

Unfortunately, these precepts are all but ignored, especially by the people who need them most. The land is full of folks who either practice those things that they shouldn't, or who fail to practice those things that they should.

These are matters of social and societal justice that we should do simply because they are the right thing to do. It is as if we have a debt to pay when confronted with them. So let's pay what we owe for the sake of love...

**Text Verse:** "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law." Romans 13:8

As we go through these nine verses today, just ask yourself, "Is doing this thing that the people are being asked to do, or not to do, loving?" If it is, then do it - not for the sake of meriting God's favor through deeds of the law, but for the sake of simply being the loving person Christ has called you to be.

This is the kind of common sense approach to the Bible that we need to hold fast to. If we say, "The law says" and then insist that everyone either does this "or else," we're being legalistic about a matter which has already been settled in Christ.

But if we say to ourselves, "This really is the right thing to do" and then we don't do it, who are we hurting? The answer is pretty much everyone who is involved in the matter, including ourselves and our relationship with the Lord.

Let us act responsibly in our dealing with others. From time to time repeat the words "Justice, Justice you shall do." I've been doing it for years and I've found that when I come to a situation that is tempting to me to do wrong in, those words pop right into my head and it prevents me from going any further.

God is the God of justice; being just is His very nature. And so let's always attempt to imitate our glorious Creator by acting like Him. To define what it means to be just, we need to read His word where His justice is on prominent display. Yes, it's all to be found in His superior word. And so let's turn to that precious word once

again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

### **I. Refrain from Evil (verses 1-3)**

As I showed last week, and as I'll remind you now, a chiasm spans the verses from 22:28-23:13. In chapter 22, Charles Ellicott stated -

"The remainder of the chapter contains laws which it is impossible to bring under any general head or heads, and which can, therefore, only be regarded as miscellaneous. Moses may have recorded them in the order in which they were delivered to him; or have committed them to writing as they afterwards occurred to his memory." Charles Ellicott

At the beginning of his notes for Chapter 23, he continues with this same type of thinking -

"From Exodus 23:1 to Exodus 23:9 no kind of sequence in the laws can be traced; from Exodus 23:10 to the first clause of Exodus 23:19 there is, on the contrary, a certain connection, since the laws enunciated are concerned with ceremonial observance." Charles Ellicott

This isn't meant as a personal slam on Ellicott, but it does show that as God's word is studied and built upon by scholars throughout the ages, we continuously get a better and clearer picture of the perfection of God's word. Rather than being miscellaneous and with no sequence which can be traced, the chiasm shows beauty and harmony within these verses. They also show definite intent.

Exodus 22:28-23:13 - Help your enemy if his donkey/ox is in trouble

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (01/30/13)

a 22:28 shall not revile God

b 22:30 oxen and your sheep shall be with its mother seven days

c 22:31 "you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field"

d 23:1 "You shall not circulate a false report."

e 23:3 not to show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.

x 23:4 enemy's ox or donkey going astray, help him

x 23:5 donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, help  
him

e 23:6 not to pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.

d 23:7 "Keep yourself far from a false matter;"

c 23:11 "and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat."

b 23:12 rest on seventh day, so ox and donkey may rest

a 23:13 no mention of the name of other gods

And so understanding that these words are purposeful and even marvelously arranged, we begin Chapter 23 at verse 1 -

**1“You shall not circulate a false report.**

In these words is found an expansion of the ninth commandment -

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Exodus 20:16

The words here are *lo tissa shema shav* - no spread a report false. The word *tissa* means "to lift up." And so this would literally be translated as "not take up." In essence, we get the mental picture of picking up a false report and putting it in our mouth.

The Greek translation of this passage says "You shall not *receive* a false report." Thus it indicates the incoming action rather than an outgoing one. In all, this one word seems to be a favorite of translators to take the opportunity for inventing a new way of explaining it. Of the translations I referred to, the following words were selected -

"spread," "pass along," "raise," "bear," "give," "utter," "admit," "publish," "take up," "receive," "accept," and "lift up."

This shows the difficulty of deciding if the intent is to receive a false report or to put one out. However, Adam Clarke notes that -

"...the inventor and receiver of false and slanderous reports are almost equally criminal. The word seems to refer to either, and our translators have very properly retained both senses, putting raise in the text, and receive in the margin." Adam Clarke

In other words, translators understand this word to indicate both receiving and putting out and so, the NKJV ingeniously uses the word "circulate" to show that it can be something coming in as well as going out. If one thinks of a mail processing machine, it receives in and it sends out. This seems to be the full intent of what is prohibited concerning the false report.

The word for "false," or *shav*, here is used for just the third time in the Bible. The first two were in the giving of the third commandment. There it said -

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in **vain**, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in **vain**." Exodus 20:7

We are not to hold the name of the Lord our God in vain, and we are not to vainly or falsely receive and disseminate a false report. This word, *shav*, comes from another word which carries the sense of desolating. And this is exactly what results from allowing false reports to continue.

Doing so can result in the most miserable of circumstances for the one who is falsely reported. When King Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard, his wife Jezebel had two scoundrels falsely charge him with blasphemy. In doing so, he was taken out and stoned to death.

Adam Clarke gives a good summary of what it would be like if people didn't carry on with such false reports -

"Were there no publishers of slander and calumny, there would be no receivers; and were there none to receive them, there would be none to raise them; and were there no raisers, receivers, nor propagators of calumny, lies, etc., society would be in peace." Adam Clarke

But in the world we live in, this is one of the most common of offenses. This is especially so today in the world with internet. People find every reason to pass on lies, knowing they are lies, for the simple purpose of destroying others. Internet trolls spend all of their time destroying others for no good reason at all.

But the Bible forbids this. Not only are we not to make up falsities, but we are to refrain from allowing them to pass through us. This idea of truthfulness in this manner is expanded on in Leviticus -

"You shall not go about *as* a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I *am* the LORD." Leviticus 19:16

Penalties for such behavior are found in Scripture. One of particular note is given to protect the rights and the name of a woman who has been so maligned -

"If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her, <sup>14</sup> and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she *was* not a virgin,' <sup>15</sup> then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out *the evidence of* the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. <sup>16</sup> And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her. <sup>17</sup> Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter *was* not a virgin," and yet these *are the evidences of* my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city. <sup>18</sup> Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him; <sup>19</sup> and they shall fine him one hundred *shekels* of silver and give *them* to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days." Deuteronomy 22:13-19

In agreement with this first clause in verse 1 are the continued words found in its second clause -

<sup>1 (con't)</sup> **Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.**

Both clauses complement each other in intent. To put one's hand with means "to join hands with." In other words, it's like making a pact where a person puts out

his hand and the others put theirs together with him in agreement, like in a football huddle.

Some translations say "cooperate" or "join forces with." Israel was told to not make such alliances with the wicked who would be untruthful in their testimony. Obviously what occurred in poor Naboth's case shows the severity of this. He lost his life simply because two people falsely accused him.

The proverbs deal with this issue as well. There it shows that by making such an alliance, punishment is what will be expected -

*"Though they join forces, the wicked will not go unpunished;  
But the posterity of the righteous will be delivered."* Proverbs 11:21

As the Lord is the ultimate judge of all such things, even if a false witness isn't caught in this life, he will receive his just punishment in the next. For the Christian who acts in this way, there will certainly be a loss of rewards at the bema seat of Christ.

In both clauses of this first verse of the chapter, the ninth commandment goes from the key point of the law to practical applications of it. Thus the Lord is further defining the intent of those majestic words *lo taaneh bere-akha ed shaqer* - You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

**<sup>2</sup>You shall not follow a crowd to do evil;**

This clause of verse 2 can be taken in one of two ways. Both are sound and both apply as much today in principle as they did when they were penned. To "follow a



crowd to do evil" means to join in with a crowd who is bent on evil because their popular voice.

The Latin phrase *vox populi vox Dei*, or the voice of the people is the voice of God, is often held to as being a reasonable way of handling disputed matters. However, it is a wholly inappropriate way of evaluating moral issues.

This concept translates into the modern thinking of "where morals come from." Apart from the truth, which is that morals are derived from God, some believe that they are based on government standards. This is where we are today with the progressive democrat movement. To them, government sets morality.

Some say they should stem from personal mores. This would reflect the views of humanists who have decided that personal feelings dictate morals. Some say that morals come from social convention, and thus each society develops its morals as they grow and develop.

Others hold steadfastly to morals being derived from herd instinct. This would be those in the Baltimore and Ferguson riots and in the Occupy movement. They believe that the herd is the proper moral initiator and the one to continue refining their morals.

This is the idea of this verse. According to this law, where the crowd goes, if it is bent on evil, it is not to be followed. There are examples of the faithful in Scripture who refused to follow the herd. Job said -

"Have I feared the crowd or the contempt of the masses, so that I kept quiet and stayed indoors?" Job 31:34 (NLT)

Jesus taught specifically on this precept when He said these words for us to consider -

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Matthew 7:13, 14

Joseph Benson most eloquently states his view on this -

"We must inquire what we *ought* to do, not what the *most* do; because we must be judged by our Master, not our fellow-servants; and it is too great a compliment to be willing to go to hell for company." Joseph Benson

What we are looking at in this verse is perfectly seen in the modern church and the homosexual movement. The crowd has gone down this unholy and immoral path and the multitudes of sheeple have followed along it as well. They have failed to realize that what is *legal* is not necessarily *moral*. They have followed the crowd and are headed to destruction.

As I said though, there is another view of these words which is equally proper. Instead of saying, "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil," some scholars translate the word *rabbim* as "great men" instead of "crowd." It can mean either, and this is a most common thing for people to do.

We see political leaders, rich people, or famous folks who are bent on pursuing evil. Our current president is the epitome of this, and yet people put in their hand with him to do evil possibly beyond anything that even Hitler or Stalin could have even imagined.

We are asked to not follow Arnold Schwarzenegger into the global warming debate just because he is wealthy and popular. We are to refrain from acting in agreement with the devil and his followers simply because they are supposedly great because of their position, possessions, or prominence. Job understood this -

"Great men are not *always* wise,  
Nor do the aged *always* understand justice." Job 32:9

<sup>2</sup> (con't) **nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice.**

Again, the word *rabbim* is used in these words and so it can mean either turning aside after many, or it can mean turning aside after great men. Either way, the idea is that justice is to be given by each of us in a dispute. Justice, justice you shall do.

We are not to turn from the truth whether it is the popular thing to do, or whether it will benefit us because a great man has already falsely testified and we could curry his favor or be saved from the power of his wrath.

The Pulpit Commentary even aligns these words with a panel of judges by saying, "...if thou art one of the judges, though shalt not simply go with the majority if it is bent on injustice, but form thine own opinion and adhere to it."

Unfortunately, the judgment of judges has increasingly been found lacking in this precept. The reason for it is, of course the declining morals of our leaders. The left has done everything possible to destroy the moral underpinnings of our society even unto the point where the words of Job 9 ring true -

When a land falls into the hands of the wicked,  
he blindfolds its judges. Job 9:24 (NIV)

The lessons of justice found within the law are given for the good of society and for the benefit of all within it. This goes from the greatest to the poorest of the land, and all in between...

**<sup>3</sup>You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.**

This verse might be a bit of a shock to us considering the deference the Bible shows to the poor and needy as well as to the widow and orphan. However, what is right is right and justice is to be blind to the status of the individual. A poor man is never to be given a favorable, but unrighteous decision simply because he is poor.

As a brain squiggle for you, the word "poor" here is the adjective *dal*. It is the first time it is seen in Scripture. It comes from the verb *dalal* which means to dangle. By implication then a poor person dangles - he is lean, needy, and weak. Hebrew is vibrant and active in how it portrays such things.

Secondly, the word for "partiality" is *hadar*. This is the first of only seven times it will be used in the Bible. It essentially means "honor." It is mostly used in man's relation with man, as it is in this verse. In a comparable passage, we read this using the same word -

"You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor **honor** the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor." Leviticus 19:15

Unfortunately, our nation has diverted from this sound precept. We began to defer in this exact manner when laws started to be passed simply because of the color of one's skin, their sex, or their economic status. Each of these carries the same idea as the simple precept of showing partiality to a poor man.

Justice is to be blind in its decisions and no judgment is to be considered for any other reason than the matter at hand. Some European countries provide greater benefits for illegal immigrants than they do for their own citizens. Such unjust laws can only further degrade the morals of a society. They can in no way make things better.

The Bible lays a framework for man to consider and to learn from. However, we as a species would rather cast the proper way off from our shoulder and carry around the heavy burden of disobedience through injustice and all the ills that result from it.

In each of these first three precepts, we have been asked to refrain from evil. God wants justice served and His people to be free from the harms that come from engaging in that which is unjust. Justice, justice you shall do.

*Treat others as you would have them treat you*

*This is the rule to you that I speak*

*Give to them when they are needy, this you shall do*

*And strengthen them when you see that they are weak*

*If one is lacking bread, would you hold back from them food?*

*If they are cold, give them a coat; show them compassion*

*Don't withhold being polite and to them act so rude*

*Don't hand out your help as if it is by ration*

*If you do these things, you will be living right*

*I will see what you have done and reward you*

*Nothing you do is hidden from My sight*

*And so justice, justice, yes justice shall you do*

## **II. The Law of the Donkey (verses 4 & 5)**

**<sup>4</sup>“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.**

This verse and its application meet with a wide range of interpretations. However, if taken at face value it is rather clear. The word *oyev* or "enemy" isn't further specified. This word is used to simply mean any enemy. The Pulpit Commentary unnecessarily finds a distinction here in who the "enemy" being referred to is. They say -

"A private enemy is here spoken of, not a public one, as in Deuteronomy 23:6."  
Pulpit Commentary

The passage in Deuteronomy 23 says this -

"An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, <sup>4</sup> because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you

Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you.

<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. <sup>6</sup> You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever." Deuteronomy 23:3-6

It could be that the Pulpit commentators were making their decision concerning public and private enemies based on the comparable passage to this verse from Deuteronomy 22 -

"You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. <sup>2</sup> And if your brother *is* not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. <sup>3</sup> You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself." Deuteronomy 22:1-3

In these verses, it speaks of the "brother's ox." Thus even if the "brother," meaning a fellow Israelite, is an enemy, you are to make sure that he gets his animal back. However, if it belongs to a Moabite or an Ammonite, they weren't under any obligation to return it. Other scholars have come to this exact conclusion.

However, it should be noted that no distinction between a public and a private enemy is given here, and eventually both Ammonites and Moabites entered into the people of Israel. Jesus descends from both people groups.

All that is noted concerning the wayward beast is that if a person sees it going astray, and even if it belongs to an enemy - *ha'shev tshivenu* - "returning, you shall surely return it" to that person. This verse then is a germ of wisdom for us to understand Jesus' words of Matthew 5 -

"“You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:43-48

If you notice, Jesus' words say, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" The law never says this. It only says, "You shall love your neighbor." Nowhere in the law does it say to hate one's enemy.

Rabbinic tradition concluded that if one was instructed to *love* their neighbors, then obviously they were then to *hate* their enemies. However, this conclusion is *not* "obvious." Rather, it is contradictory to the words of the verse we're looking at.

The person may, in fact, be your enemy, but you weren't to hate him enough to deprive him of his ox or donkey. Instead, you were to return it to him. Active kindness to one's enemy may have been repugnant to the interpreter's of the law, but it is the only possible explanation for this verse as context demands.



The spirit and intent of the law was so far removed from urging personal revenge or harm to one's enemies that it wouldn't even allow neglecting a wayward beast which would then cause that person to suffer personal loss. The Geneva Bible succinctly states -

"If we are bound to do good to our enemies beast, how much more to our enemy himself." Geneva

**<sup>5</sup> If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.**

The sense of this verse is plain and clear, regardless of the difficult nature of the Hebrew words and how they are ultimately translated. The reason I say this is that the word translated as "help" here is *azav* and it is used three times in this verse. It means "leave" or "forsake."

Because of this, it takes thought to understand what is being said. But fortunately, there is also a comparable passage in Deuteronomy which helps explain what is being ordered -

"You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fall down along the road, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him lift *them* up again."  
Deuteronomy 22:4

Again, like before, the verse in Deuteronomy is referring to "your brother's donkey" instead of the donkey of an enemy, but the principle remains the same. However, because an enemy is being referred to Keil explains the odd usage of the Hebrew -

"The peculiar turn given to the expression, "thou shalt cease from leaving," is chosen because the ordinary course, which the natural man adopts, is to leave an enemy to take care of his own affairs, without troubling about either him or his difficulties. Such conduct as this the Israelite was to give up, if he ever found his enemy in need of help." Keil and Delitzsch

For this reason, the word *azav* is first translated as "leave" in the sense of not leaving it in a helpless condition. Immediately after that, it then says *azov ta'azov* - "leaving you shall leave it," but in the sense of removing it from its burden.

It is a sort of pun on the word to get the reader to understand that even though the conduct may seem contrary to normal reason, the Lord sees nothing contrary in the principle. The reason why this is important is because it is *not* the animal that is being focused on, but the relationship. Paul says this in the New Testament

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"For it is written in the law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' Is it oxen God is concerned about? <sup>10</sup> Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? <sup>12</sup> If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more?" 1 Corinthians 9:9-12

Paul says that the law's concrete example of muzzling an ox is given as a spiritual picture of physical care for the pastor who does the hard work, laboring in his spiritual duties. Therefore, the precept of helping with an enemy's donkey which is under a burden must carry a similar New Testament connotation of helping the enemy himself. Jesus uses a simple parable to show this truth -

"A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded *him*, and departed,

leaving *him* half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> So he went to *him* and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave *them* to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'" Luke 10:30-35

The Law said to help an enemy whose animal lay under a burden. Jesus explained that not only should we directly help our enemies, but he included the words, "he set him on his own animal." It is not just that we are to relieve the burdens of our enemy's animal, but we are to accept the burden of our wounded enemy upon our own animal, and then go beyond that as well with whatever help is needed. Justice, justice you shall do.

Again, the Geneva Bible gives a short clear comment -

"If God commands us to help our enemy's donkey under his burden, will he suffer us to cast down our brethren with heavy burdens?" Geneva

*Be kind to someone that I don't like?*

*Why would I do such a thing?*

*Last year that guy stole my bike*

*And gave my own girlfriend a wedding ring!*

*Should I be nice to the person who always berates me?*

*Should I be the one to always turn the other cheek?*

*Look at my bruises, count all you can see!*

*People beat me up for being gentle and meek*

*Oh but if I can win some to the Lord*

*Through a calm and gentle attitude*

*It is better than them dying by His sword*

*And being cast into the fiery infinitude*

*Help me in this Lord; it's contrary to all I know*

*But I can do it with Your Spirit; surely this is so*

### **III. I Will Not Justify the Wicked (verses 6-9)**

**<sup>6</sup>“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute.**

Again, this is a clear and concise statement. However, for a fuller understanding of what is being said, it is important to note that a different word is used here for "poor" than in verse 3. There it was the word *dal*; here it is the word *evyon*. This is the first time it is used in the Bible. It means "needy."

Verse 3 focused on not showing favoritism to the poor. Being poor can be a relative thing. We have poor in America that have cars, cell phones, cable TV, and the like. We also have the needy in America. They are lacking those things, and they are lacking the basics too.

To pervert the judgment of the needy seems like a minor thing, but it is truly kicking one when they are down. It is both cruel and inhumane. The law forbade this. Unfortunately, Israel failed to conduct themselves in the manner prescribed here. One example is found in Jeremiah 5 -

"They have grown fat, they are sleek;  
Yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked;  
They do not plead the cause,  
The cause of the fatherless;  
Yet they prosper,  
And the right of the needy they do not defend." Jeremiah 5:28

### **<sup>7</sup> Keep yourself far from a false matter;**

This verse appears similar to verse 1, but that was dealing with receiving and passing on false testimony as a witness. This verse is dealing with receiving false testimony for judgment. The judge is to never pervert justice by receiving a false matter. If he does, it could mean life or death...

### **<sup>7 (con't)</sup> do not kill the innocent and righteous.**

When false testimony is received and knowingly acted upon, it may result in the death of the innocent and righteous. If this were to happen, it would be a case of judicial murder. As the judge is the law of the land, then their judgment will be handled elsewhere...

<sup>7</sup> (con't) **For I will not justify the wicked.**

These words are interpreted in two ways. The first is that the Lord promises that He will not justify the judge himself who has been commanded to not act in this contrary manner, and yet has done so by rendering a false sentence against the innocent.

As terrible as this crime is to be considered, it is not one which has been ignored in history. Far too often judges are willing to overlook the value of human life for whatever gain they believe they will obtain. But the Lord has promised to not overlook their offenses.

The second way this is viewed is that it means, "To be cautious of inflicting capital punishment on one whose guilt was not clearly proved. A doubtful case was rather to be left to God Himself, who would 'not justify the wicked....'" (Barnes)

Although this is a minority view, it is possible because the judge had the option of going to the priests to determine guilt. Such a case is found in 1 Samuel 14 in a dispute about who was guilty of violating an oath. King Saul was determined to have the offender killed and consulted the lots to determine who it was.

**<sup>8</sup> And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.**

The *shokhad*, or "bribe" is mentioned for the first two times here in the Bible in this verse. It can mean a gift or a reward, but it implies a bribe or a means of obtaining a favor. The Old Testament is rife with examples of bribes being used to pervert justice, and it is one of the singular reasons for the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the people -

"Now hear this,  
You heads of the house of Jacob  
And rulers of the house of Israel,  
Who abhor justice  
And pervert all equity,  
<sup>10</sup> Who build up Zion with bloodshed  
And Jerusalem with iniquity:  
<sup>11</sup> Her heads judge for a bribe,  
Her priests teach for pay,  
And her prophets divine for money.  
Yet they lean on the LORD, and say,  
"Is not the LORD among us?  
No harm can come upon us."  
<sup>12</sup> Therefore because of you  
Zion shall be plowed *like* a field,  
Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins,  
And the mountain of the temple  
Like the bare hills of the forest." Micah 3:9-12

Sadly, if the Lord is to look upon our nation and judge us in equal measure, there will be little left when He is done. Our political leaders have gotten fat off of bribes, either directly or through campaign money, and have completely perverted the justice of the people.

Uncontrolled power, wonton avarice, and ever more ill-gotten money are the very foundation of our political system. With the introduction the false global-warming agenda, it has now moved into a united effort by the leaders of the world to corrupt justice for the masses. It will only continue to get worse as the world moves closer and closer to the tribulation period.

<sup>9</sup> **“Also you shall not oppress a stranger,**

This verse is very similar to Exodus 22:21 -

"You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Exodus 22:21

The word for oppress is *lakhats*, which means to distress. It comes from a word which signifies pressure. Because this section is speaking of justice and judicial righteousness, it is referring less to physical abuse than to societal abuses on foreigners, especially in legal matters. This seems evident from our final words of the day...

**\*<sup>9</sup> (fin) for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.**

"For you know the heart of a stranger." The people of Israel were physically mistreated, but that was only a part of their oppression. They were also stripped of their justice; something that would have struck them not on their backs, but in their hearts.

Their time in Egypt was to be used as a point of reference for their conduct towards the strangers among them. Denying the stranger, meaning the foreigner among them, was so much on the mind of the Lord that He had it included in the verbal pronouncements of the curses against the people in Deuteronomy 27.

To deny the stranger justice was, and therefore still is, something that is on the Lord's mind. To take advantage of a foreigner *because* they are a foreigner is to incur the wrath of God. This does not mean that foreigners are to be exempt from



the laws which have been set up in a land. Rather, this is speaking of their treatment and their rights within those laws.

And in a comparable spiritual manner, we can look at Paul's words in the book of Ephesians to see that we have a dual duty in this regard. Yes, we are to treat the non-citizen strangers among us rightly, but how much more should we treat the spiritual strangers properly as well.

Paul says that before coming to Christ, we Gentiles were also strangers, but now we are citizens -

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Ephesians 2:11-13

It is now incumbent on us to render the same level of justice to those who are still strangers from the covenant of promise. The law, in its entirety, is given to show us deeper spiritual truths. As we walk among those who are not in Christ, let us remember to be ready to accept them into these great covenant promises that we now enjoy. Justice, justice you shall do.

Let us not deprive them of the justice that God has handed out to the nations through the giving of His Son. Let me give you some verses to think on and remember so that when you come across a foreigner to the faith, you will know how to tell them about their ticket to heavenly citizenship...

**Closing Verse:** "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory, with partiality.* <sup>2</sup> For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, <sup>3</sup> and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," <sup>4</sup> have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" James 2:1-4

**Next Week:** Exodus 23:10-19 *Wonderful pictures of Christ these verses tell* (Set Times and Feasts for Israel) (63rd Exodus Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. Even if a deep ocean lies ahead of You, He can part the waters and lead you through it on dry ground. So follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

### **Justice, Justice You Shall Do**

You shall not circulate a false report

Do not put in with the wicked your hand

To be an unrighteous witness either in or out of court

This is what to you I do command

You shall not follow a crowd to do evil

Nor shall you testify in a dispute

So as to turn aside after many to pervert justice

No, to another justice you shall not dilute

You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute  
As if his name were considered of less repute

If you meet your enemy's ox  
Or his donkey going astray  
You shall surely bring it back to him again  
I am showing you the good and honest way

If you see the donkey of one who he does disdain  
Lying under its burden, this to you I submit  
And if you would from helping it refrain  
You shall surely help him with it

You shall not pervert the judgment, such as in a lawsuit  
Of your poor in his dispute

Keep yourself far from a false matter  
Do not kill the righteous and innocent  
For I will not justify the wicked  
Never in such a contrary incident

And you shall take no bribe  
For a bribe blinds the discerning  
And perverts the words of the righteous

For justice you shall always be yearning

Also you shall not oppress a stranger

For you know the heart of a stranger, this is so

Because you were strangers in the land of Egypt

Their oppression from you I will not accept, you now know

Justice, justice we shall do

For this is how God would have us so act

To be like Him, merciful and true

To never state what is false, but only speak what is fact

In this we will be pleasing in His sight

And follow the path of our Lord Jesus

Who never strayed from what is right

And who though His death has justified us

For this we praise You, our King of glory

For You have written our names in Your gospel story

Hallelujah and Amen...