



Deuteronomy 22:1-4
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

NKJ Deuteronomy 22:1 "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.

2 "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.

3 "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.

4 " 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.

Moses here again is expositing or further unpacking the law of God, and in particular he is explaining some of the positive requirements of the sixth and eighth commandments “You shall not murder” and “you shall not steal.” Now before I begin looking at what Moses teaches here, I want to begin by unpacking some general rules, that will help us greatly to understand not only the teaching of these verses and the remaining chapters in Deuteronomy, but also God’s laws generally.

One of the things sometimes forgotten even by Christians is that each of the commandments in God’s moral law, the ten commandments, contains both negative and positive commands even when the commandment is expressed only negatively.

So that as the Larger Catechism puts it in Question 99: *where a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is commanded.*

We see that, for instance, in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Levite and Priest who passed by the man who was robbed and left for dead, did not themselves injure that man. They didn’t beat and rob him, so in their mind they had not broken the commandment “You Shall Not Murder” but Jesus points out that in not helping that man, they were breaking it, because the commandment you shall not murder also includes the positive commandment to do all that we can to preserve the life of ourselves and our neighbor.

You will remember I hope that when he was summarizing the Law of God, Jesus summed it like this in Matthew 22:37-39 *“Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' "This is the first and great commandment. "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'”*

There we see a summary of the two tables of the moral law - the first four of the ten commandments which concern our duties to God, “***You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind***” and then the next six commandments which concern our duties to man “***You shall love your neighbor as yourself.***” In summarizing it that way though, Jesus was not creating something new, he was simply combining the words of Deuteronomy 6:5 “5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” and Lev. 19:18 "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Now if you or I were driving and we saw a female church member on the side of the road struggling to repair a flat tire, and we just drove by, perhaps waving as we did so, anyone who saw who heard about it would probably say, well that’s awful, you call yourselves Christians and you do nothing to help your brother in his time of need? And they’d be right. I’m sure every member of the church would stop and offer what assistance they could.

But what if the woman struggling at the side of the road was not a fellow church member, what if they were just somebody we never met? Must we render assistance, or can we simply say I don’t owe them anything and drive by? Well clearly the general thrust of these commandments is that God calls us to help our neighbors. This law counters the natural human tendency “not to get involved” and not to go out of your way to help someone else.

And as Calvin tells it “***This instruction is greatly needed; because, whilst everybody is more attentive to his own advantage than he ought to be, he is willing to hold back from the assistance of others.***”

But these commandments go much further than merely telling us not to neglect our neighbor when we see ***him*** in distress, they tell us that our duty also extends to the property of our neighbor even when he isn’t around. If an Israelite was out and about and saw someone’s domestic animals going astray, he was not to and I love the phrase here “hide himself from them” that is playing the grown-up version of peek-a-boo “I don’t see you” He was to go out of his way to catch them and return them. Now you probably will not see your neighbors ox going astray, but you might see his dog. In that case you are not to play “not my problem.”

Even if he did not know his neighbor Moses says you are to hold on to it until he comes looking for it and then restore it to him, and notice it doesn’t say anything about a reward here. In fact the Israelite was told to do this with anything he found that was owned by someone else.

Now the commandment to lift up a neighbors animal that had fallen on the road, referred to beasts of burden, a heavily laden donkey or an ox that fell on its way to or from the market or the field, might not be able to get up again, and so if you saw that the Israelite was committed to stop and help him to get his beast back on its feet.

In such ways we practically honor the commandment to Love our neighbor by treating him as we would want to be treated ourselves in similar circumstances. You would want your straying animal or property returned, you would want help if your overloaded mechanical beast of burden broke down.

But the commandments go beyond even that, we might say ok, I’d help my friend or my brother, I’d even help a stranger. Well and Good but what about *your enemies*? You remember in the parable of

the Good Samaritan, the application is that we are even to help our enemies in time of need. That too is not a new teaching on Christ's part. Turn if you would to Exodus 23:4-5

Ex. 23:4 " If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.

5 "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.

This is not easy but it is a requirement of Christians. You will remember that in the sermon on the mount Christ said:

Matthew 5:44 "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,

45 "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.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Applications:

First kids, there are obviously huge applications here to you – Your friends may operate on the “Finders-Keepers” principle.

Second Vengeance is mine –

Romans 12:19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Not merely to not take our revenge on our enemies but to do all we can for them.

“He more emphatically and strongly expresses how very far removed from hatred and the desire of vengeance He desires His children to be. Wherefore we see that what Christ afterwards taught His disciples is taught also in the Law, that we should love our enemies. (Matthew 5:44.) Nor is it merely the desire of vengeance which is here restrained, but something more is required, viz., that believers should conquer the ill-will of their enemies by kindnesses: since to bring back a straying ox or ass is a proof of sincere affection” - Calvin

(Story of the Slave the Slave Holder and the enemy of the Slave in the 18th century USA)
Secondly here we have one of the Christians greatest tools in witnessing to unbelievers:

Thirdly if you choke on that remember that this command to help your enemies is not only the command of the Christian, it at the heart of the gospel:

Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Acts 7:59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.