

Exod 04-02-15b

Let's continue our study now in Exodus chapter 22. We began this morning at verse 16 and we have worked our way down to verse 21. In the study of the law, it is important to pay attention to detail.

Almost anything is important to pay attention to detail. There are very few things I can think of where it's not important to pay attention to detail. But it's especially important in God's Word.

As we pick up now in verse 21, let's read this together. You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. What great golden saying does this remind you of? What's the golden rule? Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.

Put yourself in the other person's place. Many times we have specific guidance on what to do and what not to do. We saw what happens with the betrothed.

We saw what happens with the sorceress. We saw what happens with the person who's engaged in some sort of bestiality. I didn't really want to dwell on that verse, but we did have a good question and comment about it during the break.

This was primarily observed in Canaan in connection with cultic worship on the part of the pagans. There would be enactments of the mythology surrounding the various cults. Many of the pagan gods were pictured as animals or animal-headed men and so on.

You would have these cultic gross enactments, or worshippers would go to the cultic priestesses. Of course, this was another form of seduction. You get people to come in because, hey, what a great time we're going to have at the old worship ceremony down here with the priestesses.

Of course, this is why degenerate pagan worship was so popular in Canaan because it had these features. But it is an abomination. God has given very specific instruction about what is and is not an abomination.

And again, the type of stuff that is being promoted, we talked about in our first lesson this morning, in terms of people trying to legitimize the homosexual lifestyle, God labels this several places in His Word as an abomination. Abominations are punishable by death. So, having said that, you shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him because you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Remember what it's like where you came from. Now, some people say they remember what it's like, like Jennifer Lopez. Oh yeah, it doesn't matter how rich I get, I'm still Jenny from the block.

Well, no you're not. Remember from whence you came. Have compassion on those that are behind you in their progress.

Now, this goes beyond just looking at people who are saved or not saved. We know that bondage in Egypt is a picture of being lost, not having deliverance from God, not having a relationship with God, not having that crossing of the Jordan and a journey toward the fulfillment of God's promises. But think about this.

How many times have we looked at another believer who's maybe in a different denomination or who is from another church, has a different way of worshiping, has a different understanding on some truth or some passage of Scripture, and we tend to, at least some of us, tend to be kind of judgmental. We want to write them off or blow them off or push them aside and say, you're messed up, what's the matter with you, you ought to know better than this. We don't give them any allowance.

The thing to look for, the sword cuts both ways. That sword of the Word of God we talked about at the beginning of our worship this morning looks into our heart, and one of the things that God sees is if we are asking and seeking and knocking, He is going to answer. He's going to open the door.

We talked about doors on Friday night. Ask and it shall be given. Seek and you will find.

Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Well, somebody might be in the process of asking or in the process of seeking or in the process of wrapping on the door, just as we have been in times past, and they haven't gotten their answer. They haven't arrived at the understanding that we have.

It is wrong to oppress. It is wrong to afflict somebody just because they haven't arrived at our lofty level of understanding or our great pinnacle of maturity or whatever it might be. We need to give people credit and try to discern based on their attitude rather than their current level of knowledge.

I used to be very impatient with people that went on the emotional side of Christianity or the Holy Spirit side of Christianity and were just all caught up in the charismatic side of worship, hand-waving, aisle-rolling, tongue-talking, strange people. And I thought, you know, God can't be doing anything with this kind of person because their circuits are blown. They're out there just rolling their eyes back in their head and they're not thinking, so God can't be doing... Well, you can't say that.

We have to give people the benefit of the doubt. And this verse is a benefit of the doubt verse. This section, Affliction of the Poor, in 22, verses 21 through 27, is an expansion and an explication of love your neighbor as yourself.

Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. The second summing up command, Jesus says, all the law and the prophets can be summed up in your vertical view toward God and your horizontal view toward others. This is where the rubber meets the road.

If you want to know how to please God, if you want to know how to walk through His open

doors and allow Him to come in through our open door, this is half the battle. This is love your neighbor as yourself. How do you do it? Do not prejudge.

Do not assume. I love the way you can divide that word up. A-S-S dash you dash me.

Assuming makes a dummy out of you and me. We should not assume. Give people the benefit of the doubt.

Do not afflict and oppress without knowing all the facts. Many people who seem to be incorrigible when it comes to the gospel, many people who seem to be incorrigible when it comes to the truth of God's word, who do nothing but argue and blow up, two weeks later you find out that they got saved. Two weeks later you find out that that was their last great struggle before they caved in to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

Some people are loudest and most vociferous, angriest, most oppositional, right before they recognize the truth of God. So do not just assume because someone is hostile that they are hopeless. Do not assume because someone is in a bad way that they're just under the curse of God, no good thing can come of it, and so on.

Wait until you have first-hand evidence. Don't even take the word of other people. If God is going to have you make decisions with regard to others, if God is going to have us make decisions, He's not going to stand at the judgment and say, well now Sam, I sent you these six different people that gossiped about that person.

Didn't you hear what they said? I sent you these busybody gossips to tell you all the facts that you needed to operate with this person. Is that what God is going to judge us on? God is going to say, look, I put you in a situation where you could observe and where you could draw conclusions first-hand. God hates a gossip.

God hates a busybody. God hates a teller of tales, those who go into the households of women and seduce them with balderdash and blather. When we have to make decisions regarding people, God will give us the first-hand experience we need.

We will know first-hand what they're like. I've gone into situations, whether it's in business or in personal life or whatever, where someone says, oh, I hear you're rubbing elbows with so-and-so. Well, let me tell you about them.

I don't want to hear that. And if somebody insists on telling it to me, I just put it in the file and keep it on hold. I take account of it.

I will take note of it. But I make no conclusions and draw no judgments from it. I wait until this person interacts with me, and then I find out what they're like.

I'm in a couple of situations right now in my work environment that are of this exact nature. And each of the people on each of the sides is ready, willing, and able to tell me all kinds of

terrible things about the other side. I wait and see what happens.

How do they interact with me? And then I do my best to make decisions that way. Believe it or not, that's what this verse is talking about. Do not mistreat a stranger.

This is someone you don't know, someone you had no previous familiarity with. Don't just automatically mistreat them. Now, what about your KKK guys down in the South? What do they light on fire on somebody's front lawn? A cross? In whose name did they do their oppressing? And do some of them continue to do their oppressing of black people in the South? They claim to be Christian.

They claim that God loves white people or whatever it is they think. What's the matter with their understanding of Scripture? Have they never seen this verse? Do not oppress the stranger. Do not afflict the stranger.

Don't jump to a conclusion. You yourself were a stranger once. Don't forget it.

You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. The nation of Israel, the people of Israel were to look with favor on those who are disadvantaged in this way. A widow or a fatherless child.

What's missing in that environment, in that component? The husband, the father. The man is missing. The man is the provider.

He's the one that is commanded by God to do his work in six days. He's the one commanded by God to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He is the one commanded by God to provide for his wife, provide for his children, to be a constructive member of society.

He's gone. So now you have a Ruth and Naomi situation. Now you have an orphan situation.

And God tells the rest of the people of Israel, Do not take advantage of someone who is disadvantaged. Don't start snaking away the woman's land because the husband isn't there to defend it. How many westerns have been made on that theme? Do not take advantage of someone who is disadvantaged, who does not have the protection of authority.

And this goes beyond just people who don't have a husband and father in the picture. There can be gaps in the law. There can be gaps in an organization.

Someone can be rendered defenseless when it comes to the protection of authority. Do not take advantage, is the command. If you afflict them in any way and they cry at all to me, I will surely hear their cry.

The refuge and the strength of the fatherless and the widow and the stranger who is afflicted is not the court. It is not litigation. It is not making some kind of public nuisance of themselves.

It is to go to God. God says, if you are the afflicted one, I will hear your cry if you cry to me. Now what if you're a widow or a fatherless child or some other put upon person and you don't cry to

God? There's no cry to be heard.

There's no divine intervention to be had. It isn't automatic. It is something one asks for.

Fascinating study you can do with the word of God, isn't there? On things that come by request and things that don't. You can say, oh gracious, I almost hate to turn my Christian radio on anymore, but I heard a lady the other day talking on the radio about pray for this and pray for that, pray for the other in your family. Talking about child raising and teenagers and this and the other.

Well, you've got to pray and this and the other. And she was talking about things that do not come by prayer. I can't believe when we've got a 66 book Bible full of instruction on what to pray for and what not to pray for that we mess this up so badly.

You cannot pray for your mind to be transformed. That is a command of Scripture to us. We decide to have our mind transformed.

Romans 12, 1 and 2, present yourself a living sacrifice. Do not be conformed to this world. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

It's an imperative. It's a command. You don't say, oh Lord, please transform my mind.

He's not going to do that. He has given us the transforming word right here. That's what we're doing when we make the decision to come and listen.

This is what we do when we make the decision afterward to think about it and make our decisions in its light. So, if you afflict them in any way and they cry it all to me, I will surely hear their cry. And look at verse 24, my wrath will become hot and I will kill you with the sword.

Now, of the promises, principles, and doctrines in the word of God, how many people say, let me memorize that verse. Let me commit that one. Let me print that out and put it on my refrigerator.

If you're afflicting someone and they pray to me, I'm going to kill you with the sword. There's a memory verse. But it is a reminder of the priority, of the importance that God attaches to preserving freedom, preserving privacy, preserving property for each person.

Now, have there been cases in history where believers, where Christians have been oppressed and have cried out to God? It's happening right now. It's happening in South America. It's happening overseas.

It has happened, and there have been Christians who have lost their lives. There have been other Christians who have been avenged in this life. Some of them will not be avenged until the next.

But I promise, and God promises, the word of God states, God's wrath will become hot. There is

a day of judgment, and just because you're saved, do not think that the wrath of the Lord is not kindled and will not burn when that judgment is implemented. We need to be really careful about how we think about others and what opinions we form of others, whether they are public Christians with shows on Christian television, whether they are private Christians in our periphery.

We are commanded to discern, and we are commanded to understand what is right and what is wrong. And when people are errant and when people are wrong, we should come to that conclusion. And in some cases, we should talk about it, but we need to be very careful about not afflicting or oppressing, because God will take note, and the judgment that He was going to send to them will come instead on us.

I will kill you with the sword, your wives shall be widows, and your children shall be fatherless. If you do not remember when you were oppressed, and you oppress others, God says, I'm going to oppress you. And if you think Egyptian bondage was hard, wait until God oppresses you.

There is a season where people get away with oppression, but it does not last. Remember the parable that the Lord Jesus told about the servant who was forgiven a great debt, and he had an underservant of his own that owed him a small debt. He didn't forgive the small servant.

And the master calls in the man and says, I forgave you this huge debt. You haven't forgiven this man this small debt. Guess what? I am reactivating your debt, and you are going to prison until you pay every farthing.

I've thought about that a lot, because I am curious if there is in fact an actual revocation of forgiveness taught in that parable. And I don't know if there is or not yet, but I will tell you this, I don't want to get anywhere near that line. If we steer well clear of that situation, we don't have to worry about whether forgiveness can be revoked or not.

But in the parable, the master forgives the debt, and the servant goes forward for a period of time with this debt no longer attributed to him, no longer hanging over his head. Then he oppresses his underling servant and holds him to account for a very small debt, and the master revokes the forgiveness, reinstitutes the debt, and puts the man in prison until he pays every penny. That's some serious penalties for oppression.

It does not bode well for us to ignore this guidance. And we need to look at it in a different way. We can oppress in very subtle ways.

We can diminish, and we can disrespect, and we can inflict our idea of a penalty on someone with whom we disagree or who we think has done wrong. And we have to keep in mind the difference between discernment and judging. We are commanded to discern.

We are supposed to figure out when someone is right or when someone is wrong. Judging occurs when having drawn that conclusion that someone is wrong, we decide that we will inflict a penalty. We will make them pay in some fashion.

We'll diminish the opinion of others by gossiping about them. We will inflict a penalty by some means. That's judging.

We need to know who's right and who's wrong. But we are not judge and jury in the sense of inflicting a sentence. So, this gets us through verse 24.

I will kill you with the sword. Your wives shall be widows. Your children shall be fatherless.

If you lend money to any of my people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a money lender to him. You shall not charge him interest. Within the nation of Israel, loans were to be interest-free.

Not just within families, but within the nation. If you lend money to any of my people, this even includes proselytes and Hittites and other ites that had come in and joined Israel and had become citizens. My people, you shall not be like a money lender to him.

You shall not charge him interest. If he gives you a pledge for something, if you take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering.

It is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in? It will be that when he cries to me, I will hear for I am gracious. We know what happened the last time somebody cried to the Lord in this context.

He came in and inflicted the very same penalty. You get the idea that in the lex talionis type of economy here, if you take someone from something as a pledge and do not return it like their cloak, you may find yourself in the near future cloakless, garmentless. If you deprive someone of what they need, what is this really go to? What's the principle that is encapsulated in this dictate from the law? Don't put undue pressure on someone.

Because they're in a bad way and have to borrow, don't oppress them in the borrowing. This is really taking advantage, isn't it? Well, I've got your cloak, and hey, I don't care how cold it gets tonight until you repay the money. You're not getting your cloak back because I'm going to protect myself.

I'm going to make sure that the money I've loaned you, I get back. I'm not charging any interest. I read that in the law.

But I'm going to guarantee my loan to you. I'm going to make sure I don't come up short. God says don't protect yourself at someone else's expense.

If it's going to get cold, give him his jacket back. You say, but wait a minute, now I have no security for the loan. Well, the same God who hears their cry will hear yours.

Let your confidence, let your justice be in God, not in some human leverage you think you have. God prevails. God supersedes.

God outranks any sort of mundane leverage of this nature, any security that we try to get for ourselves. Do what is beneficial to another. If the situation were reversed and a cold night was coming and you'd had to pledge your coat, would you want it back in the night? Would you want the guy to trust you for the money? God says treat him as you would like to be treated.

This principle transcends the dispensations. It is true now just as it was true then. It is a great illustration of the humility, which is strength under control, with which we should treat each other.

Give your fellow believer, which is what is pictured here, the benefit of the doubt. If you're going to make any assumption, assume he's going to do the right thing, not the wrong thing. This now concludes this section on the affliction of the poor, verses 21 through 27.

All of us are the poor in some area, and all of us are those who can help or have the choice of helping the poor in some other area. We want to remember what it is like to be the needy one, to be the disadvantaged one, the widow, the fatherless, and treat others as we would like to be treated in that regard. This next section is on reverence and dedication.

We have verses 28 through 31. Once again, we're lifting our gaze. We've been looking to the side now all of this time, right? We looked up, we looked down, we've been looking to the side now all the way from chapter 21, verse 12 to this point.

Now we have reverence and dedication beginning in verse 28, and this is the ninth section. We've done altars, servants, violence punishable by death, physical injury, property, seduction. Now we're going to look at the, we saw the capital offenses for paganism, then affliction of the poor.

Now reverence and dedication, verses 28 through 31. You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people. What does this remind us of? Where have we already seen something about cursing someone in authority? It's in the Ten Commandments, honor father and mother.

It's in the first set of capital offenses. The one who curses father and mother should be put to death. Here once again, do not revile God, do not curse a ruler of your people.

People can disagree with our president. They can disagree strongly. They can disagree heatedly, but they should not disrespect the president.

We were very careful when we have had other presidents with whom we disagreed and who we thought did immoral and very trashy types of things to not disrespect the man or the office. Although you can violently disagree with someone's behavior, with their choices, with their character, with their policies, we still, if that president, whichever one he may be, were to come by or be in our area, we would still treat him with respect because he is authority, because God allowed in His providences this person to come to a place of authority, whether it's in the military, whether it's in government, whatever it might be. We don't get to pick our parents.

We don't get to pick our families. We don't get to pick our... In all cases, we don't prevail in picking our governmental leaders. But when someone has authority, God says, you will respect them.

Do not curse them. Do not revile them. You will not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices, the firstborn of your sons you shall give to me.

Likewise, you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days. On the eighth day, you shall give it to me.

What day are male babies circumcised in Israel? Eighth day. It is a dedication to the Lord. The first fruits of produce and grapes and other things that produce juices, the firstborn of your sons, your oxen and your sheep, seven days on the eighth day, the first fruits, the first... When a heifer has its first calf, it is dedicated to the Lord.

And you shall be holy men to me. You shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field. You shall throw that to the dogs.

And here's another one that seems to come out of left field. What are we talking about meat torn by beasts in the field? What does that have to do with everything else that has preceded? Well, what section are we in? This is reverence and dedication. Do not demean yourself.

Do not debase yourself. What does it take... How debased is it to go out and eat a roadkill? What does this say about the provision of God that you've got to go find something that's been mauled by the wild animals and eat that? This implies that you have a God who cannot provide, that you've got to go have seconds after the jackals, after the lions, that you've got to eat something that's been slaughtered in the field and has lain there for who knows how long. God says, you will be holy to me.

You will be set apart to me. You will represent me. And those that I care for don't demean themselves.

They don't debase themselves. They don't give a testimony that says, I don't really have a God that can provide my needs. I've got to go try to find roadkills and eat that to stay alive.

Reverence, dedication. Live in our age. We transcend even citizenship in Israel.

We are members of God's royal families. We are partakers of Christ. We are heavenly citizens.

And we have to think about that before we engage in behaviors, before we act in certain ways before the world because we represent God. Sometime back, there was one of these Disney fluff movies about a gal who's like a teenager and then Julie Andrews is the queen of Slobovenia or something. And she comes over and says, well, you've got to be the next princess.

And the movie is all about the girl's angst about, well, do I want to become a princess or not? And the people, the staff of the queen are trying to get this gal to figure out how to be a

princess and so on. And of course, ultimately she does. And I understand they're making the second installment of that story that's going to come out here later.

I like Julie Andrews. Most of the things that she's done have been dignified and one or two exceptions. But the idea of that is this girl has to learn to stop chattering.

She has to learn to stop dressing in sweats. She has to learn to stop doing impulsive and ill-thought-out activities because now as the princess of this mythical country, she represents them. What she does reflects on them.

Do you see the comparison? We say, well, I am free if I want to auger myself into the ground, if I want to fly my plane into the side of the mountain, if I want to crash my car or sink my ship. It's just me. It's all about me.

No, it's not. We belong to Christ. What we do, what we choose, how we act reflects on God and God takes it personally.

You are not your own, the New Testament says. You have been bought with a price. Therefore, and it's an imperative, glorify God in your body.

And one of the things we don't do is go find a half-eaten, mauled, chewed-up carcass and eat that. This is what God tells Israel. You shall be holy men to me.

You shall not eat meat torn in the field. You should throw that to the dogs. What belongs to the dogs, give to the dogs.

Don't eat what belongs to the dogs. Well, this is a volitional choice. Some of us can choose.

There is a, as I've mentioned before, this is one of the first illustrations that pops into my mind because it is a constant threat. It is a constant seduction from the world, whether it's television or movies or the internet or print magazines, whatever it might be. There's a huge presence of pornography in our country.

That belongs to the dogs. That is not the mental intake that pleases God that should characterize someone who belongs to God. And lest the women feel neglected, there is also a lot of... Well, buy a cosmopolitan magazine and read some of the stuff in there.

It's just a verbal version of the same type of thing. It is inanity. It is what belongs to the dogs.

It's human thinking, human viewpoint. It's all about me. I am at the center of the universe.

All of the planets and stars revolve around me. How can I succeed? How can I get my husband more introverted? How can I make myself look thinner? Whatever it may be. All of this is what goes to the dogs.

It doesn't up-build. It doesn't transform. It is not God's living and powerful truth.

When we form our opinions, when we make our decisions and set our priorities, we have to do it in the light of God's Word. You shall be holy to me, God says. Don't take in stuff that is only fit for the dogs.

Reverence and dedication. Well, that finishes our coverage of chapter 22. Next time we dive into chapter 23.

This is going to be the final section. We're going to see truth and justice. We're going to see the Sabbaths and the Feasts.

And we're going to see the promise of conquest. Everybody likes to win. Everyone likes to be a winner.

Chapter 23 is the promise of victory. Like all promises, this promise has some conditions. So, if we want to be victorious, we want to prevail, how do we get there? That's what we'll look at next time.

But let's close in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the clear way you have presented your expectations of us. The basis of our judgment has been clearly laid out in your Word.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister these truths to our souls and press them upon our hearts. Help us to think clearly, to perceive the issues in each of the different situations of our lives so that we can think and choose in a way that pleases you and glorifies our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name.

Amen.