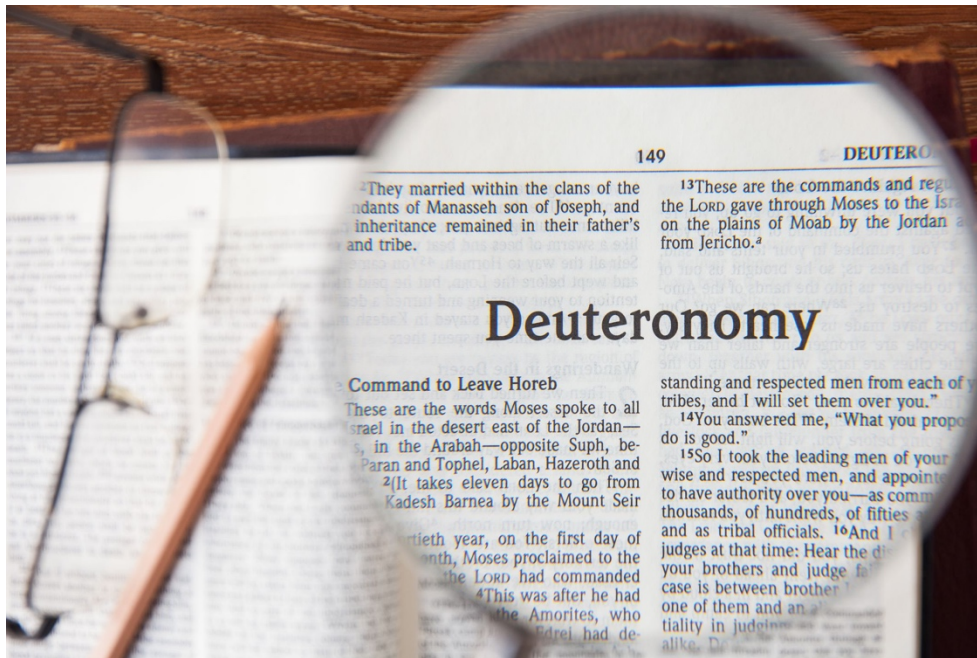


THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

A HOLY NATION (3) DEUTERONOMY 22 = 24.4



T. M. and Susie Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

A Holy Nation (3): Deuteronomy 22-24.4
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Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
The Fellowship of Ailbe
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Introduction to Deuteronomy 22-24.4

The Law of God shows us many ways of practicing love for God and neighbor that we might not discover on our own. It checks our sinful tendencies and guides us to be good stewards of God's gifts in caring for our neighbors and our world. And it shows us how to move forward in realizing more of the sanctified life.

Susie and I hope you will find this study challenging and enriching for your walk with and work for the Lord.

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T. M. and Susie Moore

1 Neighbor-Care, Creation-Care

Opening Prayer: Psalm 133.1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psalm 133.1, 3

(Trygarre Kan Ingen Vara: [*Children of the Heavenly Father*](#))

O, behold, how sweet, how pleasant, when the brethren dwell together:
All in unity abiding find God's blessing there presiding.

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 22.1-12

Preparation

1. How do these verses teach us to care for our neighbors?
2. How do they instruct us in caring for God's creation?

Meditation

Here are a few more of the "civil laws" which are given to illustrate applications of the Ten Commandments. These civil statutes are not intended to be exhaustive. Rather, while they may have a specific application as indicated, they embody larger principles that must be understood and practiced in a wide range of situations.

For example, if you find your neighbor's wallet or credit card, you need to return it (vv. 1-3). If your neighbor is struggling to fix a flat tire, lend a hand (v. 4). Don't mislead your neighbor or in any way deceive him (v. 5). If you have a pool in your yard, fence it, so that no one accidentally falls into it (v. 8). And so forth.

We also love our neighbors by properly caring for God's creation. By not taking the progeny-producing mother bird, but only the eggs or chicks, you are practicing a form of conservation (vv. 6, 7). Thus, there will be food for your neighbor as well as for you. Be wise and prudent in your gardening (vv. 9, 10). Don't plant things that won't grow well together – so that you end up losing more than you should. And don't wear out your "equipment" by using it improperly (v. 10).

Finally, at all times remember that God's Law speaks to all of life, creating paths and landmarks to keep us in the way of blessing. The tassels God's people put on their garments were meant to remind them that the Law of God covers it all – north, south, east, west, length, breadth, depth, and height (cf. Num. 15.37-41). What do you do to remind yourself to bring every aspect of your life under the governance of God's Word?

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

A certain lawyer tested Jesus with the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" After Jesus told him that he must love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love his neighbor as he loved himself, the lawyer wanted more qualification: "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus then proceeded to tell the parable of the good Samaritan; and Jesus referred to the victim as "a certain man." He was not identified as family, a friend, a co-worker, a fellow church member, or even a distant acquaintance. Merely a "certain man" (Lk. 10.25-37). In Deuteronomy, God speaks about the kindness we must show to our brother. "And if your brother is near you, or if you do not know him..." (Deut. 22.2). What? Our brother but we don't even know him? Nor even where he lives? It seems rather all-encompassing, doesn't it? And the truth is, these are the people in our "neighborhood." Everybody deserves our care and concern. Jesus finished His parable with this question: "So which of these three [priest, Levite, or Samaritan] do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" And the certain lawyer responded, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, and to

us, “Go and do likewise.”

Reflection

1. Why is it so important that we practice love for our neighbors?
2. What might you be able to do to take better care of God’s creation?
3. Can we love our neighbors well if we do not love God supremely? Explain.

*God’s providence extends itself to the smallest affairs, and his precepts do so, that even in them we may be in the fear of the Lord, as we are under his eye and care. Yet the tendency of these laws, which seem little, is such, that being found among the things of God’s law, they are to be accounted great things. If we would prove ourselves to be God’s people, we must have respect to his will and to his glory, and not to the vain fashions of the world. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Deuteronomy* 22.5-12.*

Thank You, Lord, that You have marked out the path of blessing for me today, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 133.2, 3

Pray for the people in your Personal Mission Field, that God will give you an opportunity to show many of them His love today.

Psalm 133.2, 3

(Trygarre Kan Ingen Vara: [*Children of the Heavenly Father*](#))

Like the precious oil of blessing flowing down on Aaron’s vestment,
God’s anointing rests forever where His people dwell together.

Like the dew of Hermon’s fountain falling down on Zion’s mountain,
So the blessing of the Savior dwells where unity finds favor.

2 Sexual Morality

Opening Prayer: Psalm 19.12-14

Who can understand *his* errors?

Cleanse me from secret *faults*.

Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*;

Let them not have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,

And I shall be innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart

Be acceptable in Your sight,

O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer.

Psalm 19.12-14

(St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

Who, Lord, can know his errors? O keep sin far from me!

Let evil rule not in my soul that I may blameless be.

O let my thoughts, let all my words, before Your glorious sight

be pleasing to You, gracious Lord, acceptable and right!

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 22.13-30

Preparation

1. What are these statutes intended to protect?
2. What punishments were involved in violating these statutes?

Mediation

There is perhaps no greater evidence of our age's rebellion against God and His Word than the laxity and license with which sexual behavior is regarded. It is not necessary to detail the many ways this is expressed in our licentious world.

Nor is it necessary to provide much in the way of explanation concerning what the statutes given in these verses intend. God created human sexual relations as a privilege and blessing of marriage. Abuse of that privilege in any way runs afoul of His will and slashes at the social fabric that holds society together. No wonder violators were subjected to such serious punishments in ancient Israel.

Fornication, adultery, incest, rape: All were seen as attacks on the divine institution of marriage, and thus on the authoritative role of the family in practicing Biblical ethics and teaching God's Law. Where God's Law is neglected, ignored, or simply set aside, His plan for marriage is not respected, families become unstable, and society begins to unravel. We only need to look at the state of marriage and sexuality in America today to see just how devastating disregard of Biblical morality can be.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

In these verses, boundaries and landmarks are set for physical relationships. Betrayals of all kinds are listed here. All of them are crimes against someone, and against God. Sadness. Loss. Violence. Hatred. All these actions are to be avoided. These particular sins, when perpetrated by the church, make us a stench in the nostrils of the world. And certainly to God. But He had better things in mind for His people then, and for us now. Sadly, Solomon was right: "There is nothing new under the sun" (Eccl. 1.9). We seem to be doing the same things over and over again. A regular déjà vu of grossness. The difference now is that we have the

power of the Holy Spirit to keep us from all these evils. The sin ensues because we don't flee from it. We must do better. We must *be* better. We just cannot do it in our own strength. "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you... For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8.11, 13, 14).

Reflection

1. Why is it so important that Christians work hard to preserve sexual purity?
2. How can you protect yourself against sexual temptation?
3. What does it mean to be "led by the Spirit of God"?

*This passage also tends to the exaltation of chastity. God provides against both cases, lest a husband should unjustly bring reproach upon a chaste and innocent young woman, and lest a young woman, having been defiled, should escape punishment, if she pretended to be a virgin. A third object is also to be remarked, viz., that parents were thus admonished to be more careful in watching over their children. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 22.13ff.**

Lord, help me always to respect properties and prerogatives of others, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 19.7-11

Thank God for His Law, and for all His Word. Renew your commitment to living by the moral and spiritual guidance the Lord provides each day in the Scriptures.

Psalm 19.7-11

(St. Christopher: [*Beneath the Cross of Jesus*](#))

The Law of God is perfect, His testimony sure;
the simple man God's wisdom learns, the soul receives its cure.
God's Word is right, and His command is pure, and truth imparts;
He makes our eyes to understand; with joy He fills our hearts.

The fear of God is cleansing, forever shall it last.
His judgments all are true and just, by righteousness held fast.
O seek them more than gold most fine, than honey find them sweet;
Be warned by every word and line; be blessed with joy complete.

3 Concerning the Assembly

Opening Prayer: Psalm 122.1-4

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”
Our feet have been standing
Within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem is built
As a city that is compact together,
Where the tribes go up,
The tribes of the LORD,
To the Testimony of Israel,
To give thanks to the name of the LORD.

Psalm 122.1-4

(Nettleton: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

I was glad when they said to me, “To the Lord’s house let us go!”
Holy City, let our feet be firmly planted in your soil.
Jesus builds His Church forever, where His people sing His praise!
As Your Word decrees forever, we will thank You all our days.

Today’s Text: Deuteronomy 23.1-8

Preparation

1. What is being protected in these verses?
2. What reasons are given for excluding some?

Meditation

In some ways, the words *assembly* and *people* refer to the same entity: the people God called and assembled to Himself as *His* people. But the word *assembly* refers to a specific activity of the *people* of God, in which sacred ceremonies were conducted as offerings to the Lord. One could belong to the *people* of God, but not be included in the *assembly*.

Why is that? For all the instances mentioned here, the primary motive is symbolic. There is no indication of blame for the one who is mutilated (v. 1) or of illegitimate birth (v. 2). Further, those Moabites and Ammonites excluded from the assembly were not to blame either, since they would not have been among those who resisted Israel’s passage (vv. 3, 4). These symbolic acts would have reminded the people of God that they were to be holy, and to remain separate from their historic enemies and their pagan ways (vv. 5, 6).

Edomites and Egyptians were not to be “abhorred” (vv. 7, 8). They could be permitted in the sacred assembly for the reasons given in verse 7.

Do we understand what God required here? Yes we do. It’s all quite clear. Do we understand completely *why* He required this? No we do not; nor do we need to understand all the reasons why God says or does anything. Knowing Him, being loved by and loving Him, we trust what He determines implicitly, resting in His holy and righteous and good character to do only that which is what ought to be.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“...none of his *descendants* shall enter the assembly of the LORD forever, because they did not meet you with

bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt...” (Deut. 23.3, 4). Jesus could certainly have been harking back to this passage when He spoke to His disciples on the Mount of Olives about the separation of the sheep and goats: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink...” (Matt. 25.41, 42). In the Old Testament, the Ammonites and the Moabites had another option. They could have offered bread and water to God’s people and never fallen under the curse of God. Now we too have another option. We can feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick, take in the strangers, and visit the prisoners. And instead of being told to depart the Presence and assembly of the LORD, we will hear these words: “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matt. 25.40). “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world...” (Matt. 25.34) “because the LORD your God loves you” (Deut. 23.5).

Reflection

1. What’s the lesson to us from the Ammonites and the Moabites?
2. God calls us to worship Him in the beauty of holiness. What does this suggest about how we should prepare for corporate worship? For our daily devotions?
3. We can understand what God expects, but not always why He expects it. Explain.

... by this symbol God would admonish the seed of Abraham how exalted was its dignity, as being separate from the polluted heathen. Meanwhile, He would not altogether exclude these unhappy persons from the hope of salvation... John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Deuteronomy 23.1, 2

Thank You, Lord, that in Jesus Christ You have made me holy, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 122.5-9

Pray for your church, that God will cause His peace to prevail there, that many good works may issue from your congregation, and that all your fellow church members may increase in love for the Lord.

Psalm 122.5-9

(Nettleton: *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*)

On the throne of David, Jesus sits to judge the nations all.

As our holy peace increases we are safe who on You call.

Grant us peace, Lord, by Your favor; for Your people’s sake we pray.

For the Church’s sake, O Savior, we will seek Your good today.

4 Cleanliness, Runaways, and Interest

Opening Prayer: Psalm 144.1, 2

Blessed *be* the LORD my Rock,
Who trains my hands for war,
And my fingers for battle—
My lovingkindness and my fortress,
My high tower and my deliverer,
My shield and *the One* in whom I take refuge,
Who subdues my people under me.

Psalm 144.1, 2, 15

(*Tidings: O Zion, Haste, Your Mission High Fulfilling*)

Blessed be the Lord, Who trains my hands for battle;
He is my Rock, my steadfast love and strength!
He is my shield; no foe can shake or rattle;
He will subdue them all to me at length.

Refrain v. 15

Happy are they on whom blessings fall!
Blessed are the people who on Jesus' mercy call!

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 23.9-20

Preparation

1. Why was it essential to keep military encampments clean?
2. What was to be done about slaves who ran away?

Meditation

There's a certain randomness to the statutes Moses chose to include in the book of Deuteronomy. Certainly, he left many out of those which are mentioned elsewhere in the Law (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers). In Deuteronomy he seems to highlight just a few of the many statutes, rules, precepts, and testimonies given to guide God's people in loving Him and their neighbor. It's not always clear why he chose the ones he did for Deuteronomy.

However, since the people were getting ready to go to war, some counsel about martial affairs would have been in order (as we have seen, chapter 20). Certainly, keeping their camps clean would seem to have been in order (vv. 9-14). God was in their midst, after all (v. 14), and they must work to maintain holiness even in the midst of their warfare.

Perhaps some slaves would be taken during the war, and perhaps some of those slaves might escape. The people were not to waste time chasing down runaways. Those to whom runaways fled for refuge should receive them and make a place for them (vv. 15, 16). This law of runaways would continue into the time of the settlement of the land, and it may well have been in Paul's mind as he sent the runaway Onesimus back to Philemon. He made a point of saying that he was not sending him back as a slave, but as a brother in Christ (Philem. 1.8-16).

Verses 11 and 18 are yet another reminder not to fall into idolatrous practices, because these are abominable to the Lord. And verses 19 and 20 deal with charging interest on loans of money, food, or anything that is

loaned out. Israelites must not charge interest to one another (Ex. 22.5; Lev. 25.35-41); however, they were allowed to charge interest to foreigners. These instructions were perhaps added here because, as we can imagine, the first settlement of the land would find neighbors helping one another, loaning tools and food and perhaps even money as they worked together to set up their communities. From the get-go, the people were to help one another freely, and not take advantage of one another for material gain.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Clean: free from dirt, marks, or stains (adjective). Clean: so as to be free from dirt, marks, or unwanted matter (verb). Clean: make something or someone free from dirt, marks, or mess, especially by washing, wiping, or brushing (verb). God wants us and our surroundings to be physically and spiritually clean. He doesn't want to have to "watch where He steps" in anything related to us: "For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you" (Deut. 23.14). "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully" (Ps. 24.3, 4). It is one thing to tidy up our dwellings, but another to clean out our souls. No amount of household cleanser can fix the inside of us. Only God can do that. We though, in contrast to dirt, have to participate in the restorative cleansing: "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (Jms. 4.7-10). And He wants to do it, because He loves us (Deut. 23.5).

Reflection

1. Outward cleanliness can serve us as both a reminder and a sign. Explain.
2. In almost every section of Deuteronomy, since chapter 5, something comes up to remind us not to make idols or practice pagan ways. Why?
3. How would you describe the attitude of God's Law toward those who were slaves?

What he had taught with respect to the preservation of purity at home, and in time of peace, he now extends to times of war also, so that they might keep themselves clean from all defilement even in the midst of the clang of arms. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Deuteronomy 23.9-14

Lord, let there be no uncleanness in me; help me to repent of all known sin, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 144.3-15

Thank the Lord for His great love for you. Seek His Presence in prayer, and ask Him to shed His light on all your doings for this day.

Psalm 144.3-15

(Tidings: O Zion, Haste, Your Mission High Fulfilling)

Lord, who are we, that You regard and love us?
Why should You care for our poor sinful plight?
We are but breath; You dwell on high above us;
our days like shadows pass before Your light.

Refrain v. 15

Happy are they on whom blessings fall!
Blessed are the people who on Jesus' mercy call!

Bow down the heav'ns, come down and touch the mountains.
Flash forth like lightning; scatter all Your foes!

A Holy Nation (3): Deuteronomy 22-24.4

Send out Your arrows, send them out to rout them;
stretch forth Your hand and save us from all woes!

Refrain

From every foe and every lie deliver!
Then will we sing new songs unto Your praise.
Rescue Your servants, who are Yours forever;
grant us deliv'rance by Your hand always.

Refrain

Bless, Lord, our children, strengthen them forever.
All our provision, day by day supply.
Bless our endeavors; from distress deliver.
Keep us from harm and all distressing cries.

Refrain

5 Vows and Snacks

Opening Prayer: Psalm 143.1, 2

Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous.

Psalm 143.1, 2

(Divinum Mysterium: [*Of the Father's Love Begotten*](#))

Hear my earnest prayer, O Lord! Give ear to my pleas for grace!
In Your faithfulness and righteousness, look upon me with Your face!
Enter not to judgment with Your servant, Lord, with Your loving servant, Lord:
None can stand before Your Word.

Today's Text: Read Deuteronomy 23.21-25

Preparation

1. What's another word for a vow?
2. What could you *not* do in your neighbor's vineyard or standing grain?

Meditation

A vow is a promise made to God, usually made in response to something He has revealed to us or done for us, for which we want to express our gratitude in some particular form of duty or obedience. Vows should be more a part of our walk with and work for the Lord than they are. If we are truly grateful for all His goodness to us, and if we long to lay hold on His promises, we will vow obedience in particular ways. Doing so helps us to focus on areas of our life where we want to make progress in our faith or undertake some new endeavor for the Lord (see the example of Jacob's vow in Genesis 28.10-22).

Vows are appropriate at any time God moves us to make them – at the end of corporate worship, coming out of our morning time with the Lord, or when we are suddenly made aware of the greatness of God's love or Presence with us. Whatever we vow or promise to the Lord, we must be careful to perform right away (v. 21). It is not necessary to make vows (v. 22); but if we do, we must be assiduous and resolute in fulfilling them (v. 23).

This is especially true of formal and binding vows, such as those we take concerning marriage, serving in church office, or even coming into membership in a local church.

Verses 24 and 25 remind us again that the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it (Ps. 24.1). People on a journey – as we see with Jesus and His disciples in Matthew 12.1, 2 – could enter anyone's vineyard or standing grain and eat their fill. They just couldn't take anything with them, or harvest more than they could eat in that moment. Showing love to our neighbors doesn't always require our being present with them, only that we serve them as God directs, using the resources He has put at our disposal.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The most sacred and eternal vow we make to God is for our salvation. We agree with Him that we need a Savior. We agree that we must repent of and turn away from sin. We agree that we cannot please Him or

cover up our own sin. He offers us the Gift of Jesus, and we accept it. Wholeheartedly and set in stone. We voluntarily vow to follow God. We voluntarily give Him ourselves. We must not delay in doing it; for the Lord requires it: "I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end." "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me..." "...present your bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Ps. 119.112; Mk. 8.34; Jn. 12.25, 26; Rom. 12.1) Indeed, "It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vows." "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Prov. 20.25; Lk. 9.62) With much consideration and care we make this vow; promptly and perpetually it must be kept. But God gives us the option of abstention. Decide cautiously.

Reflection

1. Why should we make good use of vows in our walk with and work for the Lord?
2. How should you use your wealth and possessions to help those who are in need?
3. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend what it means to become a Christian?

...what between men is called a covenant or agreement, with respect to God is a vow; and therefore it may be fitly called a sacred engagement, which not only is made with God as its witness, but which is contracted with God Himself. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 23.21*

Give me grace to keep my promises to You, O Lord, so that today I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 143.3-12

God has delivered us from the enemy of our soul. What will you promise Him today concerning your soul, and your whole life?

Psalm 143.3-12

(Divinum Mysterium: *Of the Father's Love Begotten*)

See, the enemy pursued my soul; he has crushed and cast me down.
He has made me sit in darkness, Lord, like those dead and in the ground.
Thus my spirit faints within me, Lord, faints within my weary soul,
and my heart is no more whole.

I recall the days of old; on Your works I meditate –
all the wonders of Your mighty hand, works both small, O Lord, and great.
Lord, my thirsty soul cries out to You! To You, Lord, I reach my hand
in a dry and weary land.

Answer quickly, O my Lord! Do not hide from me Your face!
For my spirit fails and I am like those who do not know Your grace.
In the morning let me hear Your steadfast love; Lord I trust You, show my way!
I lift up my soul and pray!

Rescue me from all my enemies! Lord, I refuge seek in You.
Let me know Your will, O Lord my God; make me know what I must do.
Let Your Spirit lead me on to level ground; save my life! Preserve my soul!
Rescue, Lord, and make me whole!

6 Divorce and the Law

Opening Prayer: Psalm 128.1, 2

Blessed is every one who fears the LORD,
Who walks in His ways.
When you eat the labor of your hands,
You *shall be* happy, and *it shall be* well with you.

Psalm 128.1, 2

(Fountain: *There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

How blessed are they who fear You, Lord, who walk within Your ways!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word, they prosper all their days!

Today's Text: Deuteronomy 24.1-4

Preparation

1. What reason is given for permitting divorce?
2. Under what circumstances could a divorced couple not become remarried to one another?

Meditation

One of the important functions of the Law of God is to show us where we have fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3.23; 7.7). This statute on divorce is sufficiently clear not to require much additional explanation. But because Jesus commented on this passage, we want to consider it not merely for what it tells us about when divorce is lawful, but for what it reveals about the Law and its role in the life of faith.

In Matthew 19.3-10, the Pharisees – always trying to catch Jesus in His words – posed a question that seemed to be based in the Law of God. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” Jesus answered by first reminding them of God's purpose for marriage, that a man and woman should become one flesh before God, and remain that way as long as they live.

“Aha!” thought the Pharisees, thinking they had caught Jesus contradicting the Law of God: “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” Jesus' reply sheds light both on our text and on the whole purpose of the Law of God. First, He shows us that the “uncleanness” mentioned in verse 1 (and implied again in verse 3) relates to “sexual immorality” (Matt. 19.9). That's helpful.

But the larger issue relates to the purpose of the Law: “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts...” gave this statute and all the rest of the Law. The Law is a divine condescension to the hardness of our hearts, to show us our sins and to warn us against indulging them. In the beginning, at creation, we did not need the Law; but the entrance of sin makes the Law necessary.

Our natural inclination is to make ourselves god and to relate to others by whatever means serve our self-interest. Each of these – worship of self and exploitation of our neighbors – takes a wide variety of forms. The Law shines a light on the dark recesses of our soul and warns us against yielding to sin. When the Spirit of God is given to a new believer, He immediately begins rewriting the Law on the heart (Ezek. 36.26, 27). A law of sin remains in us even after we come to faith in Christ, and we still need to resist it according to the holy and righteous and good Law of God (Rom. 7.21-23; 7.12). Jesus walked the path of God's Law, and He commands us to walk it as well (1 Jn. 2.1-6). The Law illuminates our sinful tendencies, then drives us to

Jesus for grace to strengthen us for obedience (Gal. 3.19-25).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God gave marriage as an earthly and physical example of our relationship with Him (cf. Eph. 5.22-33). In marriage, we declare love and faithfulness to another. Through marriage, we understand God's deep love for us: "I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, and I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD" (Hos. 2.19, 20). The banner over our earthly and heavenly relationships is love (Song 2.4). But even when that is not the case, we can still learn, in the sorrow and anger of divorce, lessons of His love and the way He deals with us when we persist in sin against Him. When we are in sin, unrepentant and unclean, God can put us away from Himself for a season; yet the restored relationship that can be found throughout repentance and return is merciful and kind: "For your Maker *is* your husband, the LORD of hosts *is* His name; and your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused,' says your God. 'For a mere moment I have forsaken you, but with great mercies I will gather you. With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,' says the LORD, your Redeemer" (Is. 54.5-8). Indeed, in the beginning, these things were not so; but since they are, we can learn a lot from them.

Reflection

1. How is marriage a symbol of our relationship with God?
2. God never "divorces" His bride (us); but He does distance Himself from us at times. Why? What must we do to return to Him?
3. How can believers encourage one another to remain faithful to Christ as His Bride?

The Lord explains the intention of the law, which required a bill of divorce in every case where a wife was put away. The precept not to put away a wife is the opposite of saying that a man may put away his wife if he pleases, which is not what the law says. Augustine (354-430), Against Faustus, A Manichaean 19.26

Thank You, Lord, for Your Law. Help me to walk in it today as I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 128.3-6

Pray for God's peace to fill you for this day, and that He may bless all your endeavors as you walk the path of His Word.

Psalm 128.3-6

(Fountain: *There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

Their homes with happy children bloom who fear Your holy Name;
their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!
Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!
Their tables and their every room declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace, and prosp'rous make our ways;
thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon us all our days!
Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!
Thus may Your blessings e'er increase upon all us all our days!

7 The Sanctified Life

Opening Prayer: Psalm 132.13-18

For the LORD has chosen Zion;
He has desired it for His dwelling place:
“This is My resting place forever;
Here I will dwell, for I have desired it.
I will abundantly bless her provision;
I will satisfy her poor with bread.
I will also clothe her priests with salvation,
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.
There I will make the horn of David grow;
I will prepare a lamp for My Anointed.
His enemies I will clothe with shame,
But upon Himself His crown shall flourish.”

Psalm 132.13-18

(Finlandia: Be Still, My Soul)

God dwells among us, and He will forever, to meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior, and made us His eternal resting-place.
His foes are banished from His Presence ever, but we shall reign with Him before His face.

Review Deuteronomy 22-24.4, meditate on Deuteronomy 23.21

Preparation

1. What is a vow? Why must we always keep our vows?
2. How many different aspects of life are touched on in these chapters?

Meditation.

Chapters 22-24.4 of the book of Deuteronomy touch on many different aspects of life. All of them have the potential for showing love to God and love to our neighbor. We love God when we obey His laws and statutes. And we love our neighbor in the same way.

Let's review a checklist of the topics covered in these verses: Returning lost possessions; helping a neighbor in need; dressing appropriately; caring for creation; constructing a home; sowing and harvesting; marital fidelity; sexual crimes; order in the assembly; cleanliness; runaway slaves; loans and interest; vows; sharing of your possessions with your neighbor.

As long as this list is, it is merely representative of all the various statutes, rules, precepts, testimonies, and judgments throughout the Law (Exodus-Deuteronomy) that illustrate, clarify, and explain applications of the Ten Commandments.

In all these areas of life we have the potential for honoring God and blessing our neighbor. Which means that all of life is sacred; every aspect of our lives can be a means for glorifying God and blessing others, even down to what and how we eat and drink (1 Cor. 10.31). Everything we are and have – all our time, possessions, relationships, roles, and responsibilities – are given to us as opportunities for loving God and our neighbors. The more we hide the Law of God in our heart, the more it will check our natural tendency toward selfishness and shape our soul for living as God intends (Ps. 119.9-11).

Vows can be especially helpful in the process of sanctification – growing in holiness. By them we target specific areas of our lives for specific actions or changes. In a very real sense, every day should find us offering ourselves to God for His glory and our neighbor’s good, like living sacrifices (Rom. 12.1,2) who are determined to watch over our hearts with all vigilance (Prov. 4.23), take every thought captive for obedience to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 10.3-5), and focus our conscience on the Law of God in all we do (Rom. 2.14, 15), so that, in everything we do, love for God and our neighbors flows like living water to refresh, renew, restore, and rejoice (Jn. 7.37-39).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

When [not if] you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay [not wait] to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely [not maybe] require it of you [not another], and it would be sin [not righteousness] to you” (Deut. 23.21). As the song by Lydia Walker says:

I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back.

You are not your own; you were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6.19, 20). All of your life, and all of your time belong to the Lord. He is sanctifying you for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit. Press on. No turning back.

Reflection

1. What do we mean by saying that all of life is sacred? How do you experience this sacredness?
2. What would be an example of an appropriate vow? When should we take a vow?
3. What can keep you from seeing all your life becoming increasingly sacred to the Lord?

The rule of vowing also pertains to the keeping of the Third Commandment, since, by vowing, men exercise themselves in the sanctification of God's name, and to promise anything to God is a kind of swearing. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Deuteronomy 23.21*

Lord, I give myself to You for this day and every day, so that I...

Closing Prayer: Psalm 132.1-12

Thank the Lord that He remembers all His promises to us. Ask Him to help you remember and fulfill the promises you’ve made to Him.

Psalm 132.1-12

(Finlandia: *Be Still, My Soul*)

Remember, Lord, we pray, in David’s favor, the hardships he endured, the oath he swore, the vow he made to Jacob’s mighty Savior: “I shall not enter through my palace door; I shall not sleep, nor slumber my eyes favor, until I make a dwelling for the Lord!”

The word throughout the chosen nation spread, to Ephrata, and in the fields of Jaar:
“Now let us go,” the faithful people said, “and worship where our Savior’s dwellings are!
Around His footstool let our worship spread; come, gather to Him, all from near and far!”

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place; Your holy Presence meet with us in might.
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus’ grace, and we will shout to Your divine delight!

A Holy Nation (3): Deuteronomy 22-24.4

For David's sake, turn not away Your face, but look upon us in Your holy light.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. How is caring for the creation an act of neighbor love?
2. Why was it necessary for the Law of God define sexual sins?
3. What is a vow? How can vows be useful in the life of faith?
4. What do we mean by “the sanctified life”, and how does the Law aid us in the effort?
5. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from this part of our study in Deuteronomy? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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