

March 5

Leviticus 19; 25; Deuteronomy 5; 20-15

Today we will examine a few verses in Leviticus . And we re-examine those “civil laws” we studied a few days ago (see Accelerator for March 1<sup>st</sup>). In our current chapter we see how the Ten Commandments are applied to daily life. The laws deal primarily with two groups of people (the poor and the foreigner) and the Big Idea is that these laws reflect the generosity and faithfulness of God toward the vulnerable.

Now, a few facts before we jump in:

- 1) Concern for the poor (including widows and orphans) was widespread in the ancient Near East and we can see through the OT that concern for the poor was particularly important to Israel (Ex 22:21–22; 23:9; Lv 19:33–34; Dt 15:7–11; 24:14, 17; 27:19; Jr 7:6; 22:3; Zch 7:10). There is a distinction, however, between the Israelites and the other ancient near eastern cultures. The Israelites were not socially motivated as much as it is a reflection of God’s holiness and character. Additionally, another distinction is that Israel’s laws concerning the poor extend to foreigners who are in their lands.
- 2) “Gleanings” was an important part of ancient Israel’s welfare system. You can see how this practice helped serve and preserve the messianic line in Ruth 2:3-7 (Ruth and her mother in-law, Naomi, were poor and helpless when Ruth goes out to glean in the fields.)
- 3) The term “neighbor” can be used for non-Israelites and is so used in today’s reading when referring to a foreigner

Notice that God’s reason for these commands on how to treat the poor and the foreigner are rooted in his generosity and faithfulness: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God” (Lev 25:35-38) and again He says “...for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.”( Lev 19:33-34). God’s reasons are simply put:

The poor (Widows and Orphans): Israel was in need, vulnerable and as helpless in Egypt. And God delivered them and generously gave them a “land flowing with milk and honey.” God’s generosity should be expressed through the generosity of his people to those who are in need, vulnerable and helpless in their midst.

The Foreigner: Earlier I said that the a distinction between Israel and the pagan cultures surrounding them was that their welfare laws were not limited to citizens but extended to foreigners. Again, the reason is that God wants his people to remember that they too were once foreigners in a strange land.

The way God’s people treat those who are vulnerable, as well as those who are not “one of us” says a lot about the God we worship and what HE is like.

This reminds me of Jesus’ words when telling a parable about judgment: “whatever you did for the least of these you do for me.” Notice in that parable the “least of these” was the

poor and the stranger. We can see that this is also communicated in the Law of Moses, in Numbers 5:5-10. The Lord equates sin against one another as unfaithfulness toward him.

How God's people treat one another reflects greatly on what they think and feel toward their God. It's not rocket science, but it is too easily overlooked. We are too easily unmotivated to serve those that do not look like us. And let's face it, the poor and foreigner very often do not look like "us".

Again, today's big idea is that God's laws reflect his generosity toward his people and his faithfulness and goodness toward the vulnerable. Today let's reflect how we reflect God's generosity in our lives.

In 2 Peter 1:3-18 we see a list of godly qualities that we should strive to grow and mature in, supplementing our faith. Peter reminds us that when we fail to grow in these qualities it is because we have "forgotten that [we were] cleansed from [our] former sins." (v. 18) and we have "escaped from the corruption that is in the world" (v. 4.) God continues to remind his people of what he has done for them.

Application questions:

- 1) What has God freed you from ?
  - a. Addiction?
  - b. "respectable sins" such as self-righteousness, legalism etc.
  - c. Freedom from broken relationships?
- 2) How can you remind yourself today of what God has done in your life?
  - a. Write them down and praise him for his deliverance.
- 3) How can God's work in your life be reflected in how you treat people who don't look like you do?