

15. More miscellaneous laws

February 24, 2011

It is easy for us to think that God only cares about the main things in our lives, not miscellaneous things. How wrong! He cares about everything that pertains our lives. Because it is not only He loves us, but also He knows what we say shows and speaks our testimonies, rather how we live.

We are going to see Moses jumping from one subject matter to another without any particular intention as we talked about it last Thursday night.

A. 40 MINUS ONE

Deuteronomy 25:1-3 "If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 2 then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. 3 Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.

When a dispute arises between persons, they are to take the matter to court. The alternative would be anarchy that taking matters into ones' own hands, and that is not acceptable in a nation governed by law, especially God's law.

By law the judge has been given the responsibility and the authority to make decisions and to make sure that the punishment, if any, is inflicted on the guilty party. This is the simple responsibility of all government and courts.

Romans 13:4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

All the punishment they administered was done in public to bring shame to the guilty ones as well as for others to take note and not to follow the guilty one's example.

We seem to have a justice system today that considers itself more compassionate and kind to criminals than victims and the public.

A guilty man, who deserves to be beaten, must be beaten with the number of blows that was sentenced by the judge according to the nature of his crime. The judge would supervise this corporal punishment in person.

The number of blows must not exceed forty lashes because more blows would be inhumane and too excessive.

In his defense to prove that he was an authenticated apostle, Paul listed the punishment he went under in 2 Corinthians 11:

2 Corinthians 11:22-27 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils

of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness--

Paul received 39 blows onto himself as according to this portion of the Book of Deuteronomy. This was to show mercy and to meticulously keep the law – one blow was left off to protect against a miscout.

B. DO NOT MUZZLE THE OX

Deuteronomy 25:4 "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain. In the threshing process oxen or donkeys were led around a threshing floor, sometimes harnessed to a central pivot. The stalks of grain were laid on the floor, and the hooves of the animals and sometimes a sledge drawn by animals would separate the kernels from the stalks and hulls.

This law concerning threshing animals occurs only here in the OT. But in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul applied this principle to the minister's right to be supported by the people he ministers to.

In fact, 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 leads us to believe that this is the real point God is making in this verse, because in that passage Paul asked, *Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?*

1 Corinthians 9:9-10 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? 10 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.

C. KINSMAN REDEEMER LAW

Deuteronomy 25:5-10 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7 But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.' 8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,' 9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.' 10 And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'

The word "levirate" comes from the Latin and means "a husband's brother," i.e., a brother-in-law. It was this law that the Sadducees used when they tried to trip up Jesus in Matthew 22. Basically, this law required a deceased man's brother to marry the widow and have children by her so that the name of the deceased wouldn't perish from Israel.

To put your foot down on land or cast your sandal on it meant to claim it for yourself.
Genesis 13:17 Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

At the same time to take off your sandal meant to relinquish any claim to the property.

Ruth 4:7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was a confirmation in Israel.

By refusing to honor his dead brother, the man brought dishonor on himself and his family. That is why the widow could spit in his face. That is going to leave some mark on his reputation.

Actually, this practice had been in place before it became a part of the law. We can find an incident in Genesis 38. Judah's oldest son was wicked and the Lord took him out. The second one also was wicked and the Lord killed him as well. Judah promised to his daughter-in-law Tamar that he would give his youngest one to carry the name of his oldest son, yet he didn't. Later time Judah thought that he was having sex with a prostitute but in reality it was Tamar in disguise. She became pregnant with twins.

Genesis 38:26 So Judah acknowledged them and said, "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." And he never knew her again.

This "Kinsman Redeemer Law" gives a beautiful background of how Christ became our close relative so that He could redeem us and carry on the human race.

D. DESTROY THE AMALEKITES

Deuteronomy 25:17-19 "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, 18 how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God. 19 Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.

The Amalekite attack on the Israelites is recorded in Exodus 17. In response, Joshua led the armies of Israel in victory over the Amalekites as Moses prayed for them, assisted by Aaron and Hur.

Because of such a strong command from the Lord to battle against Amalek until they were completely destroyed, many commentators see the Amalekites as a picture of our flesh – which constantly battles against the spirit and must be struggled against until completely conquered.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Some 400 years later, God directed king Saul to make war against the Amalekites, and his failure to completely destroy them was the primary act of disobedience which cost Saul the throne in 1 Samuel 15. He even kept the Amalekite's king Agag alive as a trophy. Knowing the stupidity of Saul, I am sure that he was not the only one who was alive in that battle.

An Amalekite would later take credit for killing Saul in the battlefield. That is not all. During the time of Esther, man named Haman came dangerously close to wiping out the entire Jewish people in that Persia kingdom. Haman was a descendant of Agag.

We are told to put to death the deeds and thoughts of the flesh. If we allow the flesh to survive and give it a place in our lives, it will come back to haunt us and may even kill us.

E. PRESENTING FIRSTFRUITS AND TITHES

Deuteronomy 26:1-4 "And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. 3 And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, 'I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.' 4 Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.

It isn't enough for a nation to have gifted and godly leaders; it must also have godly citizens who obey the law of the Lord. It has been said, "The strength of a nation is derived from the integrity of its homes." But homes are made up of individuals, so it is the strength of the individual that helps to make the home what it ought to be. Daniel Webster once said, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens."

In light of this, Moses told his Israelites to obey the Lord with their finance. When it comes to money, it was hard for spiritual leaders to convince their people then, it is still hard now. People will volunteer to work at the church. But regarding giving to the Lord, somehow they get this blank stare back to the leaders or flat out tune them out.

As I have said before, anyone who does not tithe cannot say, "I trust God with all of my heart and worship Him." That person does not understand the meaning of trusting the Lord without tithing; that person does not understand the meaning of worshipping Him without tithing. It is that important for our spiritual growth. That is the real reason why the Lord tells us to tithe, not because He is short with cash.

Numbers 18:12 All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you.

Numbers 18:12 speaks of the firstfruits that must be regularly brought to the priests, but the firstfruits described here in Deuteronomy 26 seem to be a special offering of firstfruits, from the first of the harvest they gain in the Promised Land.

Do you remember what the Lord told them through their leader Joshua when they were going into the Promised Land to conquer the enemies in Jericho?

Joshua 6:18-19 And you, by all means abstain from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19 But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord."

Why did God demand the spoils from Jericho to be His? Because it was the first fruit of the conquest.

F. GOD'S PRESERVATION OF ISRAEL

Deuteronomy 26:5 And you shall answer and say before the Lord your God: 'My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and

dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

This was the major reason God had for sending Jacob and his family on their sojourn in Egypt. When they lived in Canaan, there was great risk of the family mingling with the wicked, pagan peoples around them. To prevent this, and to allow the nation to grow, God sent them down to Egypt, which was a very racial society, and who would not intermarry with Israel. By doing so even though they could go down there few in number; and there they became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

Some would ask, "Yo preacher, how do you know that the Egyptians were racial against the Jews?" I am glad that you asked. Go to Genesis 43:32, please.

Genesis 43:32 So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.

G. PROCLAIMING THE LORD TO BE YOUR GOD

Deuteronomy 26:17 Today you have proclaimed the Lord to be your God, and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and that you will obey His voice.

The constant danger was that the people not receive God's Word into their hearts but only hear it with their ears and then forget it. A mere casual acquaintance with the Word isn't sufficient. If God's Word is to nurture us and change us so that God can bless us, we must devote ourselves to it, heart and soul.

God had claimed Israel for His own people and promised to bless them if they obeyed Him, and Israel had declared that Jehovah was their God and that they would obey Him. There was no doubt that God would keep His promises, but would Israel keep their promises?

H. APPLICATIONS

1) **God is faithful to us, but how much do we miss when we're not faithful to Him!**

2) **God cannot be our God unless we acknowledge Him in our lives and obey His commands.**