

REVIEW: This is not a series of unrelated laws, but they are all tied to covenant faithfulness. Fornication: faithfulness in marriage relationships. Sorcery, Bestiality, and Idolatry: need for faithfulness to God's ways and God's word.

INTRO: We are going through the case laws of the book of Exodus. So far, most of the case laws that we have dealt with have had punishments attached to them. Murder: execution; theft: restitution; some cases: corporal punishment. For these next few laws, there is no punishment given for the civil magistrate to administer. But that doesn't mean that they are not to be punished. It just means that God takes these cases into His own hands. Let that be a warning to us. Whatever we may have previously thought, whatever preconceived notions we may have about these subject, whatever political alliance you may have, you must be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus, and submit to His word in these areas.

(I) STRANGER (II) WIDOW (III) FATHERLESS

I. STRANGERS (21)

A. What is a "stranger"?

1. Living in Israel that were not native-born or non-Hebrews. Many Egyptians came out; they are called a "mixed multitude." (12:38)
2. Temporary residents in Israel for work or business.
3. Membership within the church and citizenship within the nation were not coextensive.

B. What is the connection in the passage?

1. Just before this, Moses is prohibiting idolatry.
2. While the law forbade public worship of idols, it did not forbid idolaters from coming in the country.
3. God wants to forbid foreign religion, but not foreigners. "Love the sinner, hate the sin." Let them in, but don't let them sin.

C. The issue is Oppression vs. Evangelization.

1. Equal protection under the law. (Justice)
2. Access to welfare. (Mercy)
3. Opportunity to for labor. (Prosperity)
4. GOAL: evangelization of the lost. As a pagan experiences the justice that he is shown by Jehovah, the mercy that he is shown by Jehovah, and the prosperity that Jehovah gives to His people, then this may help to win him to the true faith. SALT & LIGHT. **Matthew 5:16** - "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*"

D. APP: **What do you think of strangers/foreigners?** What do you think of those trying to come to our country for a better life? Do you want to hinder them? I understand that our country does not overtly affirm the lordship of Jehovah. But that doesn't change God's heart toward the foreigner. The reasoning that God gives is: "you were strangers in the land of Egypt." Israel ought to show grace and kindness to the foreigner and take it as an opportunity to evangelize the pagans. I'm not going to argue that there is a one-for-one—Israel is the United States. What is clear is that God's heart is to desire to bring the foreigner in for the purpose of evangelization. Does your heart reflect the heart of God? God had One Son, and He left heaven to be a stranger on the earth. Jesus was a missionary from heaven to earth. He came to bring strangers into His heavenly home. He came to seek and save those that were separated from Him. Do you long for pagans to come here so that you can evangelize them? Do you want the opportunity to show them the righteousness of God? The mercy of God? The prosperity that is available in a place where Christianity is allowed to flourish? This is the heart of Christ, **John 13:35** - "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*"

II. WIDOWS

A. Though protected by various legal means, they were the most prone to oppression from society.

B. Heard a story about a group of wealthy families and attorneys in TN that manipulated a group of widows out of their homes by having them sign a document that they would agree to pay taxes (which they did not realize). Of course, these widows were poor and mostly illiterate. This group

wanted to evict the women from their homes so they could build a neighborhood of mansions. God hates mistreatment of widows.

- C. Encouragement to widows and those that may be future widows: remember that Christ is your true husband. He is your protector; He has loved you with an everlasting love; He will provide for you. While your earthly husband may leave, Jesus has promised, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Widows hold a special place in the eye of Christ.

III. Fatherless

- A. When a man would die, it would often leave a mother and whatever children they may have had alone. This is why widows and orphans are often grouped together. If a widow was to be mistreated, then surely the children of a widow are in a difficult position as well.
- B. **James 1:27** - "*Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*" When I was a little boy, if I got mad at my sister and pushed her or harmed her, in his discipline he would always say, "God made the strong to protect the weak."
- C. Encouragement to the Fatherless Christian: God is your father. God will never leave you nor forsake you. He calls you His own. He has brought you into His family and He has given you an inheritance far greater than any earthly father could have left. God your Father is preparing for you a heavenly home where you may dwell with Him for all eternity. Let me encourage you to cultivate a familial love with your heavenly Father.
- D. Special Protection
 - 1. "Burning Nostrils," which is what happens when someone is infuriated. This is the **language of jealousy**. Remember when we said a few weeks ago that we need the law of retaliation because if a husband is jealous for his wife, he would rarely have the control to choose a just punishment. God is jealous for His wife and children. God will not tolerate any mistreatment of widows and the fatherless.
 - 2. Lex Talionis applied to widows and fatherless. If you afflict them, I'll take your women and children away.
 - 3. Community Involvement. "*If thou afflict them (sg. 23) ...I will kill you (pl. 24) with the sword.*" Places an obligation on everyone. We are in it together. We all have a responsibility to help the widows and the fatherless. If we want to avoid the burning jealousy of God, then we must be sure to treat the helpless well.

APP: How can we reflect God's heart towards the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless?

- 1. Prayer.
 - a. Pray without ceasing. Lift up their cause before the Lord.
 - b. Pray with specificity. Ask God to help them with specific things. (transportation, groceries, spiritual needs, etc.)
- 2. Word.
 - a. Speak to strangers with dignity, since they are made in God's image. (When I used to work in construction, I saw Hispanics treated as if they were animals, it was despicable.) **Philippians 2:3** - "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others **better than himself**.*" Treat the stranger as better than yourself.
 - b. Widows and fatherless. Call to encourage them. Make it a habit to call a family that has a widow or fatherless to check in on them. Ask them if they need any help. Pray with them. Don't make a show of it. Ladies, call them just to talk about girl things.
- 3. Deed.
 - a. Invite the stranger into your home for a meal. Φιλόξενοϋς: lover of strangers (hospitality). Remember, the ultimate aim is evangelism.
 - b. Offer to bring a meal to the widow and fatherless.
 - c. Visit with them. Read the Scriptures with them. Encourage them with the Scriptures.

If you are faithful in these, to take care of the STRANGER, the WIDOW, and the FATHERLESS. You will be well on your way to reflecting the heart of God.