



Why did Moses need to institute Israel's judicial system? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Exodus 18:13–27 prepares us for the evening sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these fifteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that God's Word corrects man's wickedness, God's ways resolve man's weakness, and God's wisdom enables us to trust that even when men are doing wrongly, God is always doing rightly.

Friday, April 15, 2022 ▫ Read Exodus 18:13–27

Questions from the Scripture text: On which day does v13 occur? To where have they returned (cf. v5, 19:2)? What does Moses do with them? What do they do before him? What does Jethro see (v14)? What does he ask? How does Moses answer (v15)? When do they come to him (v16)? What does he make known to them? What does Jethro say about this (v17)? What expected result makes it not good (v18a)? What will result in this (v18b)? What does Jethro now say (v19a)? Who will be with Moses if he listens? Who must do the difficult part, before Whom Moses will stand (v19b)? What must Moses do with what he learns (v20)? In what two things must they be instructed? What two things must they be shown? What four qualifications identify the men whom Moses must select (v21a)? Despite Israel already having what (cf. v12)? How will this leadership structure be organized (v21b)? How will the cases be administered (v22)? With what result for Moses? For it to work, what two things have to occur (v23a,b)? If those two things happen, what will Moses be able to do? And what will all the people do? How does Moses respond (v24–26)? What does Moses do with Jethro in v27?

In v23, Jethro says, "If you do this thing, and God so commands you." In other words, he is giving the best advice that grace enables him to give, but he recognizes that this plan will only be good if it is the command of God, not merely the wisdom of men. A parallel account in Deut 1:9–18 makes it plain that this did come via Jethro as a command of God to Moses and via Moses as a command of God to Israel. Israel already had elders, but this is how they came to have judges (v21–22, cf. Deut 1:16).

It is a humbling thing for men in leadership to admit to the limits of their wisdom and their vigor. Both of these limits are seen here.

Moses lacks vigor to continue what he has begun—sitting and judging the people all day every day, v13–15. "Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out, for this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself," Jethro tells Moses in v18. In other words, "you lack the vigor for this."

Moses also lacked the wisdom to see this problem himself. He doesn't seem to have thought there was anything wrong with what he was doing. In fact, it doesn't take much inference to read a sense of dignity and responsibility in the end of v16, "I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

But Jethro could see it. "What is this thing that you are doing for the people" (v14). "The thing that you do is not good" (v17). "So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he said" (v24). Here Moses was supposed to be giving wisdom to all Israel, and he didn't even have the wisdom to see his own situation properly! Jethro did.

But it wasn't just Moses who was weak and finite; the people as a whole were. That's why they needed judges in the first place. The first formal assembling of the church is about to occur at Sinai, and here we have the first selection of officers for that church-state. They were to be chosen not by popularity but by ability, spirituality, honesty, and integrity (v21). They were to be organized in progressively broader/larger groups (v21, 25). And they were to have an appeal system (v22, 26). The need for judges and the existence of hard cases reminds us God's people as a whole are sinners, and they're not always able to figure out what's right.

Each of us individually are weak and finite. So we must be willing to accept the help of those whom God puts into our life and of His design for His governing His people. And all of us collectively are still sinful, weak, and finite. So, we must look ultimately to Him as the One Who gives not just judges but the providence of the judgments... and ultimately He will give final judgment at the end.

What are you called to do in life that you need others' help for? Whom has God put in your life and/or appointed over you to help? How are you availing yourself of that help? What is your ultimate hope for your responsibilities being carried out and being fruitful?

Sample prayer: Lord, we praise You for Your almighty power and perfect wisdom! Forgive us for being overconfident in our own ability or wisdom, and for being under-willing to admit when we lack it. Make us those who know our limits, receive help, and work contentedly within the governing structures that you have established in home, church, and state. For, we ask it through Your infinitely able Son who humbled Himself for our sakes, even Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP5 "Listen to My Words, O LORD" or TPH5 "Hear My Words, O LORD"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Exodus 18 verses 13 through 27. These are God's words. And so, it was in the next day, that Moses had to judge the people, The people stood before Moses from, mourning until evening. So, when Moses father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, what is this thing you are doing for the people?

Why do you alone? Sit, and all the people stand before you from morning, until evening, that Moses said to his father-in-law. Because the people come to me to inquire of God, Well, they have a difficulty, they come to me. And I judge between one and another and I make none the statutes of God and his loss.

So Moses's father-in-law said to him. The thing that you do is not good, both you. And these people who are with, you will surely wear yourselves out for this thing is too much for you. You are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen. Now to my voice I will give you counsel and God will be with you Stand before God for the people so that you may bring the difficulties to God and you shall teach them the statutes and the laws and show them the way in which they must walk and work.

The work they must do. Moreover, you shall select from all the people able men such as fear. God Men of truth hating covetousness and place such over them to be rulers of thousands rulers. Hundreds, rulers, 50s and rulers tents, and let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter, they shall bring to you.

What every small matter, they themselves shall judge, so it will be easier for you for. They will bear the burden with you if you do this thing and God. So commands you, then you will be able to endure and all this people will also go to their place in peace.

So Moses heeded, the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said, and Moses chose Abel men out of all Israel. And he made them heads over the people rulers of thousands rulers of hundreds, rulers of 50s, and rulers of tens. So they judge the people at all times, the hard cases they brought to Moses but they judged every small case themselves Then Moses.

Let his father-in-law depart. He went his way to his own way and

So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

Churches have a big problem and big churches. Have bigger problems. This is something that we're gonna find out in the morning and evening passage God in his marvelous providence, as we're trying to finally do something about this block of active and biblical deacons going on, and on, and on in our congregation, um, has also so coordinated, that the serial preaching, through acts and the cereal preaching through, exodus would come to two of probably the top five passages The top one, passage the one in Acts and probably this one somewhere in the third through fifth of my infantile wisdoms, judgment of the top five passages that you would preach and teach for preparation for deaconid.

He brings us to the two of them on the same. Lord's Day. Praise God. One of the things we're gonna hear and tomorrow's family works up and in the morning, sermon on the Lord's day, is that the multiplication of the church was a wonderful display of the grace of God but also a trying increase of the problems of men and Moses here has congregation of as many as six million at least two million somewhere in the two to six million range.

And and that, that bigger problem is not the size of the congregation, but the sinfulness of the congregation, you put that many sinners in a group and you get problems. Even the Pentecostal church had problem in the logistics of the distribution of the food. And it turned out that those who were in kind of the minority culturally and ethnically.

We're getting overlooked not necessarily because of any kind of racism or anything like that, but just because you think more about those in God has placed proximately to you anyway, but that's for tomorrow's passage the the congregation in the wilderness, does not have the benefit even of Pentecost or of a high rate of genuine spiritual conversion.

And so, the bigness of the problem is actually highlighted in what Jethro says in verse 14. Why do you alone set? And all the people stand before you from morning until evening. Moses has, you know, great responsibility as a leader of the people, but he's spending all day every day, answering disputes between sinners.

And so the answer was actually not a bad one, God himself, as the one who should resolve disputes between sinners, the way to resolve his from the Word of God. Moses said to his father-in-law verse 15 because the people come to me to inquire of God. And then end of verse 16, I make known the statutes of God and his laws.

So even before they get to Sinai even before they have Book of the Covenant, they recognize that God has statutes and laws that God's Word is to govern disputes. Between the people God's Word is to govern questions of who's, right? Who's wrong? How should things? How should things be done?

What should be done about particular situations and so that's good. We're sinners. And so we need correction from God's work. That's one of the big takeaways here but we're also finite, we're weak. Not just not just wicked but also weak. We are limited, Moses. Had a limited amount of time and because he had a limited amount of time and a limited amount of strength, God bless them.

The man was 80 years old at this point and was gonna have to lead this wicked and rebellious and fractious people for 40 years from the age of 80 to 120. And he is the one who pends the psalm that by the Holy Spirit says, the years of a man are 70.

And if with great strength, 80 and here he is 80 years old having to do this and Jethro. His father-in-law must have been a very aged man at this point. He says the thing you are doing is not good. You might say what I'm doing. All sorts of good things.

I do nothing but tell people the Word of God, all day. Every day Isn't that good? People are, people are wicked and God's word is the answer for people's wickedness and Jethro would not have disagreed. In fact, he he says, in verse 23, if you do this thing and God.

So commands you and Moses were counts. This situation again and Deuteronomy chapter 1, as he's about to preach his final sermon, giving the summary of the statutes and laws of God, in the book of Deuteronomy. And he reminds them that he used to do this by himself without written code and what a treasure then the written book of Deuteronomy was going to be, but he reminds the people that that what is the solution is not the wisdom of man, but the Word of God.

It was not because Moses was wise in himself, but because he was telling them what God said and even Jethro says, if you do this thing and God, so commands. So Jethro isn't saying I'm wiser than you are Moses. So you should do what I say, he's saying. If what I am telling you to do is, in fact, the command of God is according to the Word of God.

It's actually inviting Moses to use that same. Speak the Word of God to everyone else technique that he well techniques strategy, principle principles better word that same speak the word of God to everyone else principle by which he has been telling others what to do and he says use it on yourself.

So Jack throw isn't against using the word of God for everyone else. But he says, you also have to recognize that we're not just wicked. We're also weak. And so we need to do things, not just according to God's Word, but in God's ways, which means we need to be humble.

And realize that we need help. Not just the sustaining help of God. But recognizing the way each of us is providentially limited, We need to employ that help that God gives us in those people that he has set around us. So for instance, I need to let mom do the mom things, just because I have ideas of how to do everything in.

Well, what I think is the best way because if I thought there was a better way than I would do it that way, instead that does not mean that I need to be taking over everything that mom does. Mom, does those things to free me up for those things that I'm doing, Moses needed.

These judges to free him up for the things he needed to be attending to, which wasn't by the way, only the leadership of the entire nation, but Jethro had brought him back to Moses. His wife and children, He needed to add. Now the very important every day. A lot of a bunch of every day, duties of being a husband.

And a father. And so, one of the things that you boys will want to do Someday is make sure that in having your wife, do the things that are that are her way of being a helper. Exactly. Corresponding to you that you take that not as what enables you to do more of your hobby.

But what enables you to be a better husband to be a better? Father and girls that you want to be a helper. Exactly. Corresponding to your husband one day and also in the church, God gives us elders, God gives us deacons. And in order that I may be freed to do, especially the ministry of the word and prayer, we need elders and deacons who are doing what the Lord Jesus has assigned to them.

We need entire congregations. You need the public worship of God. You cannot have the public worship of God by yourself. You cannot do it in a stream in the woods in the side of a mountain unless you are running from Dragoons. And that's where the Covenant or minister has gathered has gathered the congregation, which would, yeah.

If they had a rushing stream, that would maybe help mask the noise of the congregation singing. Anyway, not to push the illustration too far. You need a congregation. God, has assigned different things that he brings to every congregation. You remember if the whole body was an eye or if the whole body was an ear or hand or so forth.

And first Corinthians 12, God is the one who is arranged the members of the body together as he pleases, Ephesians chapter 4. One reason why the ministry of the pastor teacher is so important is that the Lord uses him to keep the doctrine of the congregation sound, because everyone has to minister to everyone else.

And if we love one another, then it we will want it to be the truth that we speak, not our own opinions and our own impressions. God does not arrange a bunch of different theological ideas, in a bunch of different people. Sometimes you you hear especially in PCA circles that it's good to have a variety of theological, opinions.

That rounds out our congregation. No. You should all have one theological opinion. That's why you have pastors and teachers because we all have different gifts and different roles and they all need to be done with that. Same theological opinion but we need help. We must not be isolationists. We must not be try to do everything ourselves.

Even if we know the right thing to do, Moses knew the right thing, he knew the Word of God. He was receiving directly and immediately, as God's prophet, The Word of God far in a far, superior way to anyone in Israel. And yet, it was not good. That he who would try to do it all himself.

So they picked men and they pick not, just according to ability. Although ability is something that is in God's providence and must not be ignored, but godliness was the most important. They fear God so they fear God and not men. They are principled. They want to do it as right because they know that they are always before the face of God as God would say, about a chapter later, in the first commitment, you shall have no other gods before me.

And so they need to be men who know that they are before the face of God who are not much swayed by what other men think. Because there are they the what God thinks, there's two important to them, men of truth. So they don't go by the wishy-washy waves.

Churning wind blowing opinions but they go by the words of God, the kind of men who when Moses would give a statute or give a law would take the principle that is established there and apply it rather than go by the fields when they get people in front of them.

So Abel men, many fear, God many truth, who hate covetousness, who recognize in themselves. The fact that desiring men's praise or men's property is a danger because that makes you open to manipulation. If you're not content with the place that God has given you the esteem that whatever level of esteem.

He's given you in other's eyes. The. And if you're not content with the possessions that God has given you, you open yourself to be manipulated because in the desire for others to think more, highly of you coveting, that praise and that honor for yourself, you'll do what they want instead of what God wants or what God says.

And if you if you desire, what they might give you, that makes you an easy mark. They'll know that you're the kind of person that you just grease the skids a little bit by by giving you the present that you like, or you always having that nice meal after the negotiations and you want the negotiations to go?

Well, because your tongue loves that nice meal, and you know what, a mess up, getting your nice meal. When it's over, or the recognizing in yourself, the potential for covetousness, makes you hate it. And you say, I must be content with whatever God has given me so that I don't open myself up to being manipulated in the and thereby betray, the fear of God and the Word of God, where I do care so much about what God thinks.

And I do want to do things exactly according to his word, but all of that can be smashed by covetousness. So that's the kind of guy that Jethro said and Jethro here, remember priest of Midian speaking as an agent of God not just a father-in-law and a grandfather. Although those things mattered very much but that's the kind of man that Jethro told Moses that he should pick.

And so God has not just his word by which we must be ruled and helped but his way. And for Israel, the way was to be governed, not just by Moses. But now, but this entire structure of judges with these broadening courts, so that you had the tens, you know, 10 probably households and the one guy from among that 10, who would settle the disputes, and he would be the most able and God-fearing and man of truth and covetousness hating guy among those 10.

But you know, a group of 10, they're going to be disputes that aren't adequately settled when they come to that guy. So in that group of 10, there would be there would be five of them and they'd be a group of 50 and there would be the guy from the group of 50 who would answer when the ones from the groups of tens.

He'd have the disputants and the leader of the ten who had heard the case and given a decision. And not everyone liked it and those three parties would come to the ruler of the 50. And then those four, or maybe the two and the ruler of the 50 would come to the ruler of the hundred and maybe those two and the ruler of the hundred come to the ruler of the thousand.

We don't know exactly the details of the structure and the appeal system. But there was a set structure, people knew where to go whom God had given them to help them because it was God's Word that they must be ruled by. And, and there was a set of appeals and the whole time, you're not putting your hope in the men, you're putting your hope in God, who has given the men.

And so he says, listen now to my voice first 19, I will give you counsel and God will be with you stand before God for the people so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And so, if you're a person who you've got a difficult case and an important enough case that you just couldn't get it solved, you get all the way to Moses.

Your hope is not so much that Moses will get it, right. But that God is the one who is with, Moses. God is the one before whom you are standing and God is the one to whom you are entrusting the outcome. So that if despite all that God has given Moses and all the ones under him have gotten it wrong, you still trust that God is getting right whatever God is doing, that's very important for you in a fallible church government system, which is the only kind.

We have this side of Gloria. The other side of glory is a church government of one Jesus and you get their art sitters. So there aren't disputes, there aren't judges or cases. There's just a king and everybody who loves and loves to please him in perfectly does so. Well, I look forward to that form of church government.

That's not what we can have here. But you still within that system, knowing that sessions and Presbyteries, and Synods, and assemblies can get things wrong yet, you trust that God is getting it right? And then even more. So, if we think the church system is broken, wait till you, look at the way the judicial system in the civil state, where God's Word is now, not even allowed and openly and on hostilely opposed.

And yet, we can trust that we can commit ourselves to Him who judges, justly, as our Lord. Jesus did in first Peter 2 and we're told by the scripture suffer as a Christian, if you're going to suffer, Don't do wrong. And God will get right? What he is doing through your suffering.

Both in his glory and honor and praise in the last day, and in his vindicating, you and punishing those who persecuted you. So if the system is necessary because of the wickedness and the weakness of men, then it behaves us, doesn't it to do to judge disputes by God's Word and to have a method of judging those disputes that are God's way as we trust in God's wisdom to do rightly.

Even with wicked men and weak men. He meant. Let's pray her father in heaven. We are sinful. And so we pray that your word would continually be instructing us, and correcting us. And then especially when we have a dispute that you would give us such knowledge of your words to know where to look more and more and skill, and handling it.

And they continual attendance of your Holy Spirit to give life to our minds and hearts. And to, to foster our new nature in Christ so that we can resist and overcome. That sin that comes from our remaining fleshliness And so help us. We pray in our wickedness and confess also that we are weak and that we are proud and so we often are forgetful of are weakness and to try to do things either on our own or outside of those institutions that you have established for your glory.

And for our good, forgive us O Lord and make us to be humble and to be grateful that you have established systems of governance in the home and in the church and in the state. And we pray, God, that you would help us to trust you that even though you use fallible, men to rule, and to govern us and fallible.

Men and women and boys and girls in our home are congregation are our community, our state for the good of the whole that yet we could trust that you O, Lord our infallible. So give our hearts a great and sound confidence in you through Jesus, knowing that you did not spare him but gave him up for us.

All or certainly together with him. Giving us all things and pray, Lord, for my children that you would grant to them to know, your righteousness, your truth, your power, your faithfulness, your wisdom, your goodness. So that they would be able to submit themselves to your Word, to avail themselves of the help that you have given in your way.

And to entrust themselves to your wisdom and your love and thereby live in a proper manner in on this side of glory until you bring them into the age where they will not know, wickedness or weakness though. Still finite, they will be able to live righteously and mightily before you forever.

Bring us at last to that place. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.