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Exodus 23 verses 1 through 9. These are God's words. It's not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

You shall not follow a crowd to do evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute. So as to turn aside after many to pervert justice, it's not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute. If you meet your enemies ox or his donkey going astray, You shall surely bring it back to him again.

If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would refrain from helping it, You saw surely help him with it. You shall not pervert. The judgment of your poor in his dispute. Keep yourself far from a false matter, Do not kill the innocent and righteous For I will not justify the wicked and you shall take no bribe For a bribe.

Blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous. Also, you shall not oppress a stranger For, you know, the heart of a stranger because you were strangers in the land of Egypt. So far the reading of God's holy and inspired. Holy inspired and an errant worked.

Well in verses 28 through 31 of chapter 22. Last week, we heard about the difference that it makes to be the people of a holy God. And specifically, we heard flushed out and some details that principle that we find several places in Scripture. I didn't list them all in your outline, their several, for instance, in Leviticus.

But that principle that we have already heard that God's people are to be a holy nation and kingdom of priests, and the application of it being be holy for y'all have the Lord your God is. Holy and this is something that continues in the church that we are to be holy as now not just our God who has redeemed us.

But our Father who is adopted us that we are to be holy as our Father. In heaven is holy that Peter especially picks this up and the first and second chapters of his first letter that we are to be holy as God is. Holy and just as God is just, There is therefore, if you think about how the Lord spoke about Israel, and they're holiness from the nations, and holiness unto himself and the requirement, therefore for their holy thinking and speaking and living being an application of who's they were that they were to be holy because he is holy, You can hear that reflected.

Can't you in the way that the Lord refers to the church? Any commonly calls us? What saints And we look around in the church and say well they're not very saintly. Yeah, but they are called saints. Have been set apart from the world and much of what the scripture commands us then is to be what we are to be by God's grace what God has made us by His grace.

And so it's not surprising When we turn the a corner, as it were from the end of chapter, 22, coming out of a passage in which the holiness of God was supposed to be born out in his society, treating him as holy and acting as those who are set apart as holy unto him, that we find in the first nine verses of chapter 23, instruction on being just people because we have a just God.

And so if we're to put it in the in similar terms, we would say be just as the Lord, your God is just or we just as your father, in heaven, is just and this justice is commanded specifically, in the areas of what kind of witness we give and yes, in a formal court setting.

But also there are many informal settings in which we give or don't give testimony of a sort. And so we are to be just in the sort of witness that we give in verses 1 through 3. And we're to be just in what sort of neighbor, we are and verses 4 and 5.

And when we are in places of judgment in positions to give judgment, we are to be just in what kind of judgment we render in verses 6 through 9 And as he deals with these kind of three areas of our life. He deals with the most difficult situations to show us that we should be just as God is just first.

Then just are justice. When we are in the role of a witness, He says, you shall not circulate a false report. This is a situation in which you're not the one who came up with the false report. You're not a liar but you are tempted to go along with what is being said you, perhaps you perhaps know that part of what is being said isn't true.

Or you don't know that all of what is said is true but you perhaps strugg your shoulder or let it pass by and you don't challenge it and you become complicit, you become a participant in the circulating of the false report. Sometimes children, It is. It is easy or it would be scary.

It is easy not to or it would be scary to speak up for something that, you know, is true. And so you just keep your mouth shut and let it pass by. And you don't take the risk of challenging it. The problem with that and the second half of verse 1 is that if you permit the false report to circulate, if you're participating and letting that in letting that keep on being said, then it is the same as if you put your hand in with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

And so we aren't just because it seems like we're it's a small role in just permitting it to be reported. We are not to participate in that. Of course it gets harder If there's an entire crowd doing evil, you shall not follow a crowd to do evil. You say oh well it's a good thing that I'm I'm a Christian and I'm in the church and I'm in a Christian household because there won't be crowds who do evil.

And, you know, I can just go along with the crowd and it'll always be good. The problem with that sort of thinking is that God is addressing his church here. And so he tells them not to follow a crowd to do evil, he is telling them. Basically in his providence that his church is going to have crowds in it that do evil and that even when you're in a church where the whole crowd is doing evil, You are not permitted to do evil with them and sometimes being righteous in church is lonely.

And the Lord says that, when everybody else is giving false testimony false witness that you are still even if by yourself to refuse to go along with the crowd, he says, nor shall you testify in a dispute. So as to turn aside, after many to pervert justice in the last words, the word justice is being supplied by your translation, but that word pervert is also a turning sort of word And the idea is that people are giving their opinions or giving their testimony in one says it.

And another says it, and another says it. And as they all turn in one direction, You even though you don't believe or would not affirm from your heart, what you are saying? You go ahead and turn the same way that everybody else turned. You may have been resolved at the beginning that you were going to speak up for what was right?

And you weren't going to say what was wrong, But as then one, and then another, and then another Perhaps you even thought. Well, if that many people are saying, and it must be, right?

But doesn't the Lord remind us here? The the principle that every man might end up being a liar.

Let God be true. And every man a liar and it doesn't matter how many of them have said it, If it's not, right? And you don't know it to be right. You don't say it And so beware of excusing. What seems like a smaller role in false witness verse one beware of going along with a crowd in verse 2 and beware of self-deceptive religion and false justice.

You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute. Now why would someone do that? Well, the main reason people do things like that show. Favoritism to the poor in his dispute is because there's this, there's a way in, which it makes us feel better about ourselves.

Like we are really being good to be the champion of the poor. Are you though? If his case isn't right and he's lying, and he's manipulating to try to get his way. Do you help him By reinforcing that sin? You're not helping the poor, you're using his poverty as an opportunity to do something.

That feels self-righteous And now not only are you abusing his earthly circumstance, but you're actually harming his soul to feel spiritually better about yourself. Now, this is done on a massive scale in our society. It's called critical theory and that, which God calls evil Here, man, calls good, but we are not to call good evil and evil, good.

And we are to mistrust ourselves when we come up with ways of making ourselves feel righteous. So he says no don't show partiality to the poor man and his dispute. If you really want to empathize with the poor man, you come alongside him, you help him be truthful, you help him in.

Whatever ways. Our righteous. But you point him to the righteous and just and holy God in whom alone. There is hope for sinners. You don't help him to manipulate and to lie and to pervert justice. And so there's that justice as a witness. There's also justice as a neighbor and the hardest kind of neighbor is the enemy.

This is useful, sometimes in. And disputes arguments between brothers and sisters. You say, well no, be kind to your sister. She's not my sister so well. She's not actually she did that first but whatever. It's not acting like a sister to me. Well, God says, love your neighbor as yourself.

Wow, She hates me. She blah. Well, God says, love your enemy. You never actually get out of the commandment. Do you based on how your sister is acting, or how your brother has ever? How your spouse is acting. And so, he picks the hardest one. He says if you meet your enemies ox or his donkey going astray You shall surely bring it back to him again.

So this is you know, you weren't planning on doing large livestock restoration service, this afternoon, You were going somewhere and you were doing something else. And there's an animal that's going to stray. And you happen to notice that it's your enemies. Now what does our remaining fleshliness want to do When we see our enemies oxford?

Ah serves him, right? That's providence. It is providence. It's providence of the God who demonstrates His love in this that while you are still sinner Christ died for you that. Although for adjust man, one would hardly dare to die Christ died for his enemies. And so it's a providence in which God gives you an opportunity to demonstrate by the way you respond to that ox or that donkey that you belong to, the God who has satisfied his justice upon himself falls it up with one further and now you don't just have an enemy.

You have a foolish enemy in verse 5. If you see the donkey of the one who hates you lying under its burden and you would refrain from helping it. You shall surely help him with it. This is compassion not just on your enemy but also on the animal and it goes against the way we would ordinarily.

Want to think serves them right? He doesn't take good care of that animal to begin with, and then he loaded it up to heavy. That's what it gets for belonging to him. Well, It's still God's creature and it is in God's providence that belongs to him, and you do have an opportunity.

Now, both to take good care of the creature and to love your enemy, which is what God commands you to do. You see, Jesus wasn't really saying more in the Sermon on the Mount than the Lord had already taught in his law and in His Word was he he was perhaps saying it in a different way or more plainly, but the morality of the New Testament is the same as the morality of the Old Testament.

God didn't soften up or get spiritual or make new demands upon the heart in the teaching of Christ. This is the teaching of Christ. You want a red letter Bible? Well, if you want to read letter Bible from us, you better prepare to have a Bible in, which all the letters are red because it's all from Christ, isn't it?

And so we are to be just even to our enemies. Love our enemies as ourself. And even at great costs to ourselves. And then the last place justice as a judge and recognizing our own hearts and all the different things that tempt us. When we're in a position to make a decision concerning someone else, This is, you shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in His dispute.

Now this I could go either way, it could be or refusal to show partiality to the poor, but it's also probably here in this case. There refusal refusal to show partiality against the poor. You see the poor guy can't pay you back and he doesn't have the influence to make sure things go well for you.

He's probably not going to be in a position where he is going to make a decision or a judgment that significantly affects you. The temptation is that, if he's poor that you decide, well he can't do many. Do me, any good? Yeah, but you missed a second person. Possessive pronoun.

He is your poor because the Lord has put Him in His providence in a position where you have an effect upon him and you're assigned now by God to be just in. We need to Take responsibility for those whom. The Lord has put in our input in his providence.

Has put in our path. We also need to be aware of injustice, due to fear of outcome. Keep yourself far from a false matter. Do not kill the innocent and the righteous for I will not justify the wicked. Hear what God is saying here. He knows that especially in a capital case, there may be a temptation to lower the burden of proof.

But what if this guy really did it? And we're just missing something. And and he might actually be wicked, even though it hasn't been proven. And so, out of fear, you render a verdict of guilty in a capital case, when the man might actually have been innocent. This is actually one of the places in Scripture that we get the principle of innocent until proven guilty.

And the reason for that is because God knows who is guilty and God is perfectly. Just even though you can't, we can't prove in a case where we can't prove it. God still knows and he will not justify the wicked. He's not getting away with it as it were And so beware of injustice due to fear of outcome that rather than acting upon the evidence that's in front of you.

You worry about how things might turn out. If you don't give a particular decision and so you act out of fear, you give judgment out of fear. The third place you need to mistrust your own heart. You shall take no bribe for a bribe of blinds. The discerning and perverts the words of the righteous.

Notice, what sort of person is in danger being bribed in verse 8. This isn't the wicked guy who has established that all you need to do is slip them, a little something. In the judgment, goes your way. It's a discerning man and a righteous man who is under the instruction in verse 8.

But what does the discerning man say about his own eye? He says, I know I have enough discernment to know that my eye tends to be blinded. When I'm receiving benefit from someone, I know enough about my heart to know that. Sorry. I know enough about my heart to know that my words tend to come out the way the guy wants.

If he's someone that I've received something from or and so, I refuse to be on the receiving end of favors. Even if I have every intention of rendering the right judgment. Anyway, not receiving the the gift because I want to give him a different judgment. Instead, I refuse the gift because I'm suspicious enough of my own heart to be able to see and think, and decide rightly, if I'm receiving a benefit from that, It's exactly.

The opposite of American politics, isn't it? Where you would say, no. Please don't give me any money because I mistrust my mind and I mistrust my judgment that if I was on the receiving end from you I would not do what is right? Because it would pervert my ability to understand and see and think correctly.

We should mistrust ourselves. And then of course you remember the empathy that we saw commanded in chapter 22 here. It's very explicit, isn't it? Also, you shall not oppress this stranger for, you know, the heart of a stranger because you are strangers in the land of Egypt and he reminds us that Providence belongs to God.

And so empathy comes not just from this principle of learning to put ourselves and others places and think about what it would be like in their situation but also remembering that God who has given him that providence and us this providence may in fact decide to switch those things.

And how will we want God to that? We want God to act in our situation. And how will we want others to act in our situation? If the roles were reversed, you see that, even in the way that the, the apostle appeals to the, the churches in Macedonia and Ikea to send help to the church and Jerusalem because there may come a time when that church is a is doing well, financially and you are in need And so he says, you shall not oppress a stranger.

You shall not take advantage of the fact that the foreigner among you not having family who can stand with him in the gate and not not only land or having rights in the society. Don't take advantage of him. Why? Because, you know, the heart of a stranger, you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

And what did the Lord do for them from the land of Egypt and the house of bondage? Oh, well, in the pastor says at that way. We remember He's making again the comparison to himself and his own justice as I am Yahwe your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage.

And so he's giving you an opportunity, isn't he? When someone is in a position of disadvantage, he's giving an opportunity to imitate him in his in his kindness to us has similar

to what the Lord Jesus said. If you love those who love you, If you love only your friends, how are you any better than the Gentiles?

But if you love your enemy Then you're like your father in heaven who causes a sun to shine in his rain to fall on the just and the unjust alike. And if you love the stranger then you're like your father in heaven who has redeemed us from out of our bondage.

Again, this does not mean pervert. The justice of this stranger is the same God as he was in verse 3, isn't he? This doesn't mean help the stranger break the laws and get away with things, but it does mean don't oppress him. Does mean help him in both ways in his earthly plight but especially in his spiritual plight?

This is the society of God, here. That stranger ought to find more than the blessing of not being tyrannized. He should find the blessing of knowing the living God who has made himself known in his church and especially so and the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Thank you. Lord for giving us this brief time.

In your words to remember that you who are the just God and who have constituted us your church as your society on the earth that we ought to be just as you are just even as we ought to be holy as you are. Holy Lord. We look at how Israel conducted themselves as a church state and did both of those things poorly.

We pray Lord that the justness with which your people in your church. Now, conduct ourselves would bring you much glory and honor. And we do ask that you would bring a new season of saving multitudes and bringing them to faith in Christ gathering them into your church. So that as you grow your church up into Christ and the people whom, you redeem are made more and more just that the society would with, which they are filled.

Would be made. Just again have mercy on us O God for not only Are we in an unjust society? But precious little is taught about proper justness, even to your church. So we pray that your spirit would not let this pass in one ear and out the other. We pray that he would keep this from being merely a talking point or a way of arguing.

We pray that your spirit would write this truth, on our hearts, that we would reflect what you teach here. That we would reflect your justness into your justice for. We ask it in Jesus name, Amen.