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Exodus 22 versus 21 through 27. These are God's words. You shall neither mistreat. A stranger nor oppress him for you restrangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child If you afflict them in any way and they cry at all. To me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will become hot and I will kill you with the sort.

Your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless. If you lend money to any of my people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a money lender to him. You shall not charge him interest. If you ever take your neighbor's garment, as a pledge, You so return it to him before.

The sun goes down For that. Is his only covering it is his garment for his skin? What will he sleep in? And it will be that. When he cries to me, I will hear for I, I'm gracious.

So, for the reading of God's inspired and inerrant worked.

There are two great reasons why we need to know that God hears the needy. And the first great reason is that we are needy Despite our delusions otherwise. And the second is that we are forgetful of others neediness. And so, we need to be reminded that when we are forgetful of them are take advantage of them.

We run ourselves, contrary and opposite. To God. Who cares for the needy and who is their hearer? And who is their advocate? Now both of these are often situations in our Christian lives in which we really do need. Help Often. We are needy, and we wonder if anyone, hears, and we often even in our flesh, tell ourselves lies that.

There is no one who sees and no one who hears and no one who cares. And so we need to be reminded that the Lord is an advocate and an avenger and he listens to us. But also often we are just thoughtless of others and this presents itself in many ways.

And so we need to be reminded. We need to be helped by the Lord as he does hear to Israel. We've been hearing the Lord give various case law. Different instruction for Israel, is a society, that applies the Ten Commandments in one way or another giving instruction for what is a crime and what penalty that crime should receive.

But here he doesn't tell us any of the penalties. He just tells us what we will do or what we should do, and he tells us that if we fail to do it and the one who does not seem to have an advocate cries out to him, he will listen to them.

And the implication is, it will not be well with us because he is the one who inflicts. The penalty Note verse 24, I will kill you with the sword. Your wives shall be widows and your children fatherless. God inflicts, his own penalties both in this world and the next in the case of these particular instructions.

And so, the one who is atheistic will say, well I can just skip these instructions because the magistrates aren't going to come get me for them, but the one who knows the true and living God cannot think that way. He thinks These are the great commandments and infractions in the Civil law because it has not the magistrates who will execute me for this.

It is God Himself. Who will execute me for this knowing him to be our avenger in the third place enables us to love our enemies. You remember the application that he makes of this fact about himself in various places, vengeance is mine. I will repay says the Lord. And so he says Don't avenge yourselves.

Leave room for the wrath of God. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he's thirsty, give him something to drink. And where do we need to hear that more often than in our houses, because we are such fools and so fleshly that we often slip into thinking. My wife is an enemy and we're in competition with her or my husband is an enemy.

And so, we feel that we have been attacked and we attack back or my siblings are enemies and you come upon two of them committing a series of heart and hand murders against one another. And when you rebuke the one, what do you hear? He started it. What does that He made himself my enemy and yet has God not said that he is the avenger and all how that helps us to be able to keep loving our wife, as ourself or loving our husband and continuing to submit to him out of a desire.

That he will be one without a word, loving our brother or sister who have been made an enemy to us and perhaps, even being restored to thinking of them in a brotherly or sisterly way, making known to them. Their sin and seeking that they might be recovered from sin that they would repent.

And the scripture says you've gained your brother when you do that. So we are very needy of the instruction of this passage which teaches us that God is an avenger and an advocate. And he does this in two different ways. First by Commanding, a special carefulness of the needy.

And then second by commanding or provoking really a special empathy toward the needy and when he provokes it of course it's implied that it's required first. Then God commands, a special carefulness of the needy. You shall not mistreat Whom. Well, if you didn't remember the passage that we just read or you weren't looking at it, you say anyone you're not supposed to mistreat anyone.

You're right. You shall not oppress whom Well. Also, anyone You shall not afflict Home. Well, really anyone? Right. So, the fact that the Lord here is saying, you shall not mistreat a stranger, that is a foreigner. Who is not recognized does not have status in Israel. And so they don't have a covenant representative, who will defend their case in the gates, where disputes are handled and they don't have property.

And they don't, They really don't have rights. You shall neither mistreat? A stranger nor oppress him or when the Lord says you shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. That is one who's husband has been taken and he's not there to stand for her and defend her and take up her, cause in the gates or one whose father has been taken.

And he's not there to do that. For the children. The idea is These appear that they have no advocate and so you think and our tempted to think we are tempted to take advantage of them because there is no one who will defend them. There was no one who will take up their case and that's the way the world thinks.

And that's the way the world works. And that's even the way the remaining sin in our own hearts work. But it's based on a lie because they do have an advocate. They do have someone who takes up their case and he is much more frightful than whatever the world could do for you.

The reason this is mentioned here is not so that they will be shown favoritism, The Bible actually forbids that And if you verses when we get to 23 verse 3, we'll read and hear you shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute. And the same thing is taught in Leviticus.

19, verse 15. So this isn't commanding favoritism to the poor. This isn't critical theory, where you add up someone's internet, intersectionality score and that decides how much the government will be for them and against everybody else. Now, this is a special care for those to whom the Lord has a special care.

He listens to the stranger, He listens to the widow. He listens to the needy, he paints himself this way and he teaches us that. If we are His people then we will imitate him in this Is that not what he says, Pure and undefiled religion is to take care of orphans and widows in their need and to keep oneself on spotted from the world.

Often people forget the last part as well. And so, we are to imitate him in this and he commands his people Israel. This society that he's that he is constituted. Now at Sinai his constituted a church and his constituted a nation there at Sinai and he commands this special carefulness of the needy.

It's very strongly emphasized. Verse 23. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all, to me, I will surely hear their cry. Now, sometimes you wish that we would just translate a little bit more. Literally, There's this construction in Hebrew. That does the bold face underlining circling italics.

There aren't actually any of those things in the Hebrew manuscripts, but when God, attaches the infinitive verb to the infinitive form of a verb to the imperfect form of that verb, he emphasizes it strongly. So that it might be helpful. If in Genesis chapter 2, he says in the day that you eat of it, instead of you shall surely die.

Which is pretty, you know, emphasized but just but dying. You shall die as you die, you will do nothing. But die dying. Will be it. And so if we read verse 23, a little bit more, literally if afflicting you afflict then and crying. They cry to me hearing, I will hear their cry.

And which do you think of those intensifications? Is the strongest Man cannot afflict in his oppressing. And man cannot cry out in his oppressedness as strongly as God hears in his hearing. And so you have that emphasis in verse 23, God commanding, this special care. Notice the you guys know a word probably anthropomorphic language when God speaks of himself as having hands and so forth.

But this is anthropopathic language at the beginning of verse 24, which is to speak of God as having emotions, because God doesn't subject to changing feelings. Like we are and even the word changing probably was a clue to some of you children, who just became better theologians than I'm afraid.

The vast majority of preachers in our country. Because you know God cannot change and if God cannot change he cannot have changing emotions. But that does not mean that God's mindset or attitude towards things as somehow weak or uncaring, What we would say on moving. But of course God cannot be moved And so God speaks to us just like you sometimes.

Speaks the referencing his mouth. When he doesn't have a mouth or referencing his hands when he doesn't have hands. He uses something that he built into how he created us. So that we will understand how he is interacting with us. Not because he has those things but because

he's given us something in our own experience and our own design to give us a connection by which we can understand him a little better.

Well, here's the connection in verse 24. My wrath will become hot. Some of us have been that angry. Some of us have spent many years, trying not to be that angry, but when a child gets upset and starts to have a temper, You know, the kind that when you see it in a grown person, you get concerned.

Like they should have learned how to control that and you can feel the anger in your nose. And, you know, often it's God's nostrils. He describes, he uses the anthropomorphic and the anthropopathic at the same time, become hot. Sometimes we'll say, if people they're seeing red, when God describes his response in this way, He's emphasizing to us.

The necessity of having a special care for the needy. Note the intensity and the symmetry of the penalties. He doesn't say If you mistreat them on the street. You. Or if you oppress them, I will oppress you. He says If you mistreat them because They don't have a husband to defend them, I will kill you so that your wife doesn't have a husband to defend her.

He says if you mistreat them because they don't have a daddy to defend them, I will kill you so that your children don't have a daddy to defend that there is emphasis here in the intensity and the sorry that should say asymmetry of the penalties in verse 24. But God doesn't just command us a special carefulness.

We reading this would say, all right, on my at the top of my do not oppress or mistreat or afflict list is going to be Sojourners widows and orphans. But he doesn't just command us a special carefulness, He provokes us to and therefore implies a command of special caringness that we would practice putting ourselves into their places.

He does that already in verse 21 when he says, you shall neither mistreat, a stranger nor oppress him for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. What what's that language do? Doesn't it, doesn't it? Bring the Israelites to a place where he remembers what it was like and God is reminding him of the condition in which his neighbor is found Now, are they going to be strangers for whom special care is extended?

Or are they going to be strangers of whom special advantages taken? And of course you remember which one they were when they were in Egypt. There was special advantage taken of them. Now again, this is not give them preferential treatment and treat everybody the same, But this is do not take advantage of them.

And in this case, it's don't take advantage of them. And Remember what it is like so that you will not just be careful not to harm them but that you will care about what it is like to be then and call this empathy, it is important to develop the skill of putting yourself and the other person's place.

Now, the Lord does this, especially in verse 26, Where he paints? No verse 26 and 27, where he paints for us the picture of taking the neighbor's garment as pledge. And if if the neighbor is giving up his, his heavy coat, not the working one when the day is hot.

But the one that you put on when the Sun is going down, it's time to go home and the temperature swings are our massive. And this poor man is the sort of laborer who has to work from sunup to sundown, in order to to sustain himself and to be able to pay off the loan.

And so the only thing this guy has is that garment, So that's how how poor he is and you shall return it to him before the sun goes down for that, is his only covering and perhaps you have

been trying to sleep in the middle of the night or perhaps you have had to share a sheet, or a blanket with someone at some point.

And they fall asleep. And hopefully it's because they're asleep. They're pretending to be asleep while they roll themselves into a cocoon and steal. All your covers not that we would ever think that of anybody else or do it ourselves. He says, that's his only covering. It's his garment. You're really gonna sleep in that thing that smells like him.

Reminding you all night long? That It's not yours. It's that guys, you're gonna comfort yourself with how it was your right to take it because that was the collateral for the loan and these are the rules.

And then he says, for his skin and he makes us to picture the one. Oh yeah. It's his collateral and we'll take it back in the morning and hopefully he'll be able to pay off his debt and and get his garment back permanently. But the picture is of him with his skin exposed cold, unable to sleep, kept awake and what will he do?

What will he think of If you've ever been in the whole sheet or blanket sharing situation? You know what you're thinking of, I can't believe they're taking that cover their belonged to me and I can't sleep and they're sleeping so well. And and God says, when he starts thinking that way and crying out to me, I will hear him.

I will hear him and so he provokes us to have us, not just take special care not to oppress them but to have a special empathy Even by the language he uses he makes us to put us put ourselves in their place. So there's the command in verse 25.

If you lend money to any of my people who are poor among you, you shall not be a money lender to him. You shall not charge him interest. It says put yourself in the man's place. If he needs a little extra capital to start a business, venture he's a guy who has money and is making money and if you want to make money by lending a money fine.

But if he's a guy who can't eat these money to take care of himself and he needs money to take care of his family and you're going to lend to him, practice empathy of putting yourself in the person's place. So that you understand that he's not trying to get money And when you help them, you help him because you're identifying with as neediness.

Not because you're trying to get money like the money lenders do So both are very important that we don't take advantage of people. But even more than that, that we imitate the character of our God. By developing the practice, the habit, the skill of putting ourselves and other people's shoes of trying to understand what it's like to be them and their situation so that we will care about them and start to imitate our God.

Because you know why? He's an avenger. It's the end of verse 27, it will be that when he cries to me, I will hear Four. For I am gracious.

You see what he's saying? There that when we develop empathy, when we develop care. When we develop graciousness towards others than our hearts and minds are being conformed to the character of our God. That's the reward. That's better than the money. You could have made off the loan. That's better than a few extra degrees of warmth, as you wrap yourself in an extra garment, it's better than anything.

You could gain any advantage, you could gain because someone didn't have an advocate and you really got the best of them in the business deal or in the court case, the advantage of being conformed to your God of being made more gracious. That's better than all those other things

put together, Behold how gracious our God has been and is to us and our own neediness and let us seek to bring honor to Him who has been so gracious to us By imitating him and a special care and empathy for the needy.

Let's pray. Oh, Lord. How good you are. And so how certain it always is that your word is good because it's yours and because it's your means by which you work in us by your own goodness. And we pray that that is what you would do. That your spirit would remind us make us to meditate upon mull over how good and gracious you are and the hearing God that you are and the advocate God that you are in the Avenger.

God, that you are. Oh Lord, give us to know you better as a result of having heard your word preached. But Lord also work in us by Your Word and give us to reflect you better by what you do with your Word in us which word we have heard preached.

Who bless your name? For the knowledge that even as we pray, these things we're fumbling along praying as you've taught us because we know these purposes from your own word. So do according to your word, We pray. Lord, in the name of your son. Our Lord Jesus. Amen.