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Exodus / Exodus 20:22–21:11

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### Introduction

- <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2025/april/piano-doctor-restores-ohare-baby-grand.html> - God is in the restoration business! God at work in the lives of broken people to make us like His Son so He can use us for His purpose.
- God uses the people He is restoring to be instruments of restoration. People need to be restored - brought into a relationship with God so they can experience joy and eternal freedom.
- [2 Corinthians 5:18](#) - A reconciling people = a compassionate people. God is a compassionate God ([Exodus 34:6](#)). He brought the Hebrews out of slavery and set them free. He gave them His law so they would know how to live in His freedom and ultimately be a blessing to the world - to be a people of compassion.
- Are you compassionate? Being compassionate isn't simply feeling bad for someone or having pity for someone. Being compassionate is to see someone's suffering and determining to do something about it.
- Are you compassionate or petty? Compassionate or judgmental? Compassionate or vindictive? Compassionate or hateful? Be honest: it's a struggle to be compassionate.
- Over the next few weeks, we're going to survey some of the laws in the Book of Exodus. This is a very difficult section of the Bible because the laws are given to a very specific people in a very specific time period.

However, while the laws are at times challenging to understand, they are full of timeless principles for followers of Jesus.

- The passage we're looking at this morning is challenging, but it helps us to live with compassion. Three ways to help us live with compassion towards others.

## You must put God's truth into daily practice.

- [Exodus 20](#) = The Ten Commands - Commands that follow = case studies on the Ten Commands. Ten Commands = Love God with everything you are, love your neighbor as yourself.
- 613 commands in OT. How the Ten Commands apply in a specific culture in a specific time. These are Israel's laws, not our laws. We are under the new covenant. We are not ancient Israel. While Old Testament law is a covenant with Israel, that doesn't mean there's not application for us. Obviously, the ten commands apply to us because they are timeless principles that help us live to honor God. The Ten Commands are repeated in the New Testament.
- These case laws are how the ten commands applied to the nation of Israel so they might live as a royal priesthood among the nations. The 613 commands are more like case studies than statutory codes. They do not address every possible situation but a series of legal precedents wise elders could use in settling disputes.
- [Exodus 20:22-26](#) - God knew that Israel would fail to live out the Law. An altar constructed as a place of sacrifice and a place to remember what God had done for them. Throughout the Law, many ritual laws - how to make sacrifices to atone for their sins so they can experience communion with God who had revealed Himself at Sinai.
- [Exodus 21:1-23:33](#) = the book of the Covenant and contains a variety of laws that touch every area of life: holy days and festivals, agriculture,

what to do in cases of wrongful death, how to put up a collateral for a loan, how to care for their animals, etc.

- A section of the Bible that we tend to gloss over because these case laws are hard to understand because they were given to an ancient people. However, an important principle: there's not an area of our lives that we can't put God's truth into daily practice.
- You need that reminder - God's Word matters for your every day life. ([Psalm 119:9-11](#) - David knew the significance of knowing and keeping God's Word.)
- Three questions you need to ask yourself on a regular basis:
- **What does God's Word say?** (This is why David constantly talks about meditating on God's Law - [Psalm 119:15](#)). When your making decisions, when you are facing a temptation, when you are in conflict, when you are dealing with issues at work, or issues in relationships, what does God's Word say? God's Word might not speak specifically to every situation (it didn't for Israel), but God's truth does inform every situation. How do I live out love for God and love for others in every situation?
- **How does God's Word challenge my thinking?** The Law a mirror - show's me where my heart has gone astray. It challenges my sinful thinking. Are you humble enough to allow God to challenge the way you think? Or, are you stubborn and resisting how God wants to change your thinking? ([Romans 12:2](#))
- **How should God's Word shape my actions?** What do I do in light of what I know? Repent of a sin? Seek restoration in a relationship? Take a step of faith? Respond to God's Word in obedience.
- We're not going to be a compassionate people if we're not letting God's Word shape every area of our lives. How do you see God's Word shaping you?

## You must let God's grace extend through you.

- [Exodus 21:1-11](#) - After the Ten Commands, God first calls His people to reflect on their relationship with slaves. Seems odd - especially for us because we don't have slaves, and when we think of slavery we think of the slave trade of the 1800s that was a horrible institution that divided our nation and led to civil war.
- However, it was a part of life in the ancient world. The Israelites were former slaves who had been set free, and they needed to remember that when they thought about their relationships with slaves.
- *Slaves* might be too strong of a translation for our modern ears. In Hebrews language the word can mean *worker* or *servant*. This isn't someone that was bought by an owner and put to forced labor. That kind of involuntary "slavery" forbidden ([Exodus 21:16](#)).
- The type of servanthood talked about here is a bondservant, someone who is working off a debt. This was common, and would continue to be common well into the New Testament times.
- This makes sense - what do you do in a society where there isn't welfare, government housing, or other types of help if you fall into poverty? What would you do if you owed a debt that you could not repay? What do you do if there's no such thing as bankruptcy? You voluntarily put yourself in indentured servitude.
- In indentured servitude you lived your master's home, worked hard in exchange for room, board, and an honest way.
- In Israel, indentured servitude favored the servant, not the master. If the master was a God-fearing master who obeyed the Law of God, then indentured servitude actually favored the servant more than it benefited the master because the servant would experience the grace of God flowing through his earthly master.

- In Israel, all people should experience compassion, whether a servant or free man, every person had worth value and should be treated as an someone made in the image of God. vs. 2-11 show how a servant experienced grace and compassion.
- vs. 2-4 - The servant was not a servant in the master's house forever. After 6 years of service, free to leave. If he came with a wife, he can leave with his wife, but if married while in servanthood, and married another servant, could not take what belonged to the master. The master had a right to keep them until they could be set free or he could buy their freedom. Could be a way of protecting wife and children from the husband who might find himself back in debt. Could have been the safest thing for them.
- When the debtor was set free in the seventh year, not to leave empty-handed ([Deuteronomy 15:12-15](#)). Servant would be set free with skills to be productive in society.
- vs. 5-6 - The servant didn't have to leave. If showed much compassion by the master, had a family, why leave? He might grow to love his master and want to stay, and if so, provision for him to stay under his master's care for the rest of his life.
- vs. 7 - A man who was in debt might sell his daughter as a "concubine." The verses that follow sound really odd, but in a culture where servanthood was the norm, God's Law establishing a way for women in this situation to be cared for.
- "Concubine" = an arranged marriage for the servant girl. Arranged marriages were normal in ancient times, and arranged marriages were often used to negotiate for economic gain. vs. 8 - If the master not pleased with the servant girl, he must let her be redeemed, most likely by the father who sold her into slavery. She was to be sent back home. The master could not sell her to someone else.

- vs. 9-11 - If he gives the woman to his son in marriage, he must treat her as a daughter-in-law. Or, could not take advantage of her for his own pleasure. If he took a wife in addition to the servant woman, must continue to care for the servant woman, and if he refused, he must set her free to go back home.
- Again, these laws given to an ancient culture, and we do not know all the details of this ancient culture. It was a very different world that we live in, and when we read these laws, in some ways we want to cringe. But, don't miss the heart of God. In an ancient world, God's Law given so that all people might experience compassion.
- Obviously, this arrangement subject to abuse. Sinful people didn't always abide by the covenant. But, the law in place to restrain sinful behavior.
- How does this apply to us?
- **You have no right to take advantage of people.** Temptation to use people to get what you want instead of blessing people. You shame your spouse to get what you want. You complain to get people to feel sorry for you. You put harsh demands on your children to get them to do what you want. You lie to get people to go along with you. If you're the kind of person that wants something from people instead of something for people, you lack compassion.
- **You have no right to look down on people who are struggling.** We judge, we criticize people for poor choices, we gossip about people who are suffering, we stereotype, we refuse to help people who need help because we think we're better than and they deserve their suffering. That's not compassionate.
- **You have every reason to be a vessel of God's grace.** Since God has been gracious to you, you can extend grace. Every person made in the image of God. Every person you encounter presents an opportunity for you to show genuine care.

- Pray for the heart and attitude of Christ and be sensitive to the Spirit.
- Don't see any person as an inconvenience on your time or resources.
- Don't be too prideful to make a genuine sacrifice and show real compassion for the good of someone else.
- Honor God and trust God to be at work in the heart of the people He calls you to minister to.

## You must let God's compassion capture your heart.

- Law = a tutor. Points us to our need for a Savior. Like a mirror - it shows us where we fall short. We fall short in showing compassion. If you are going to live out the compassion of God:
- **You must see how Jesus served you.** Jesus is the Suffering Servant (Isaiah) who had so much compassion for you that He suffered for you. He served you and extended grace by going to a cross for you. He made time for you. Jesus doesn't see you as an inconvenience. Instead, He deeply loves you and gives Himself for you. He died for you then rose again so your sins could be forgiven and you could be brought into the home of a new master - a heavenly Father who only wants good for you.
- **You must choose who you will serve.** Yourself or God? vs. 5 - For those of us who believe the Gospel, this is the statement of our hearts.. "I love my master." May that be the statement of our hearts as we consider the compassion of God. May the love for our Master give us a desire to cling to Him and to extend His compassion to others.
- This morning, if you have never placed your faith in Christ, turn from your sins and turn to Him by faith.

