

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
9-28-22

Deuteronomy 24

The Law Of Divorce In Ancient Israel – Verse 1

¹ If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house,

24:1 A certificate of divorce: According to these laws, divorce was allowed in Israel, but carefully regulated. Under God's law, the marriage contract cannot be simply dissolved as soon as one partner wants out; there must be cause for a certificate of divorce. Even with cause, divorce was never to be seen as a preferred or easy option. The Hebrew word translated divorce has as its root the idea of "a hewing off, a cutting apart" — it is the amputation of that which is one flesh.

24:1 He writes her a certificate of divorce: God commands here that any divorce be sealed with a certificate of divorce. In other words, it was not enough for a man to just declare, "we're divorced" to his wife. The divorce had to be recognized legally just as the marriage had been, so a certificate of divorce — a legal document — must be issued, and properly served (puts it in her hand).

24:1 She finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her: This describes the grounds of divorce and indicates that a certificate of divorce could not be written for just any reason.

Jesus carefully and properly defined what uncleanness is in Deuteronomy 24:1. He said, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery (Matthew 19:9). Jesus rightly understood that uncleanness refers to sexual immorality, a broad term referring to sexual sin, which includes, but is not restricted to, sexual intercourse with someone who is not your spouse. The Hebrew word translated uncleanness in itself implies the meaning of sexual immorality; it is literally, "nakedness of a thing."

The Law Of Remarriage In Ancient Israel – Verses 2-4

² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

24:2-4 Some think this passage supports divorce, but that is not the case. It simply recognizes a practice that already existed in Israel. All four verses must be read to understand the point of the passage; it certainly is not suggesting that a man divorce his wife on a whim. Divorce was a permanent and final act for the couple. Once divorced and remarried to others, they could never be remarried to each other (24:4). This restriction was to prevent casual remarriage after a frivolous separation. The intention was to make people think twice before divorcing.

The Law Honoring Marriage – Verse 5

⁵ If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

24:5 Recently married couples were to remain together their first year. This was to avoid placing an excessive burden upon a new, unproven relationship and to give it a chance to mature and strengthen before confronting it with numerous responsibilities. A gardener starts a tiny seedling in a small pot and allows it to take root before planting it in the field. Let your marriage grow strong by protecting your relationship from too many outside pressures and distractions—especially in the beginning. And don't expect or demand so much from newlyweds that they have inadequate time or energy to establish their marriage.

Do Not Take Someone's Livelihood As A Pledge – Verse 6

⁶ Do not take a pair of millstones—not even the upper one—as security for a debt, because that would be taking a person's livelihood as security.

24:6 No man shall take the lower or the upper millstone in pledge: A millstone was something essential to a family's livelihood, therefore it was forbidden to take it as a guarantee for a loan. This warns Israel against taking advantage of each other in times of great need. We must take care that we never unfairly profit from the poverty or difficulty of others.

24:6 For he takes one's living in pledge: Non-essential items could be taken as a pledge. Although interest could not be charged on a loan to an Israelite in need, a pledge could be taken — collateral to guarantee the repayment of the loan. This command forbids the taking of collateral that would take away a man's ability to provide for his family and get himself out of debt.

The Punishment For Kidnapping – Verse 7

⁷ If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling them as a slave, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you.

24:7 If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel: Kidnapping was usually done in the ancient world not so much for return and ransom, but so that one could sell the one abducted to slavery, just as was done to Joseph by his brothers (Genesis 37:28). That kidnapper shall die: This crime was serious enough before God, so as to command the death penalty.

The Command To Act Swiftly When Leprosy Breaks Out – Verses 8-9

⁸ In cases of defiling skin diseases, be very careful to do exactly as the Levitical priests instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them. ⁹ Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt.

24:8 Take heed in an outbreak of leprosy: Leviticus 13 and 14 describe in great detail how God wanted lepers examined and quarantined. Because leprosy was such a dreaded disease, God commands here that they take heed in an outbreak of leprosy, so it would not become a plague throughout Israel.

24:9 Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam: In Numbers 12, Miriam led her brother Aaron in a rebellion against Moses, and for it, God struck her with leprosy. Though Moses prayed for her to be healed, God let her be a leper for seven days before healing her, and she was shut out of the camp seven days (Numbers 12:14). If someone as prominent as Miriam was quarantined as a leper, it showed that every other leper in Israel should also be quarantined.

Handling A Pledge Rightly – Verses 10-13

¹⁰ When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into their house to get what is offered to you as a pledge. ¹¹ Stay outside and let the neighbor to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. ¹² If the neighbor is poor, do not go to sleep with their pledge in your possession. ¹³ Return their cloak by sunset so that your neighbor may sleep in it. Then they will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God.

24:10-13 Throughout the Old Testament God told his people to treat the poor with justice. The powerless and poverty-stricken are often looked upon as incompetent or lazy when, in fact, they may be victims of oppression and circumstance. God says we must do all we can to help those who are needy. His justice did not permit the Israelites to insist on profits or quick payment from those who were less fortunate. Instead, his laws gave the poor every opportunity to better their situation, while providing humane options for those who couldn't. None of us is completely isolated from the poor; many of us face needs at one time or another. God wants us to treat each other fairly and do our part to help meet one another's needs.

The Command To Pay Your Workers – Verses 14-15

¹⁴ Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. ¹⁵ Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

24:14 You shall not oppress a hired servant: A servant might be oppressed by not being paid, or by brutal or unsafe working conditions. God commanded employers to treat their employees fairly and kindly.

24:15 Lest he cry out against you to the LORD: The LORD hears the cry of the oppressed. James 5:4 warns the rich man who oppresses his workers: Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Each Shall Bear His Own Sin – Verse 16

¹⁶ Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

24:16 A person shall be put to death for his own sin: God commanded that each individual be responsible for his or her own sin. A father cannot be blamed and responsible for the sin of their (grown) children, and the children cannot be blamed and responsible for the sin of their parents. It is wrong for a parent to automatically blame themselves for their wayward children; though they may have a part in the problem, it isn't always the case.

24:16 For his own sin: There are instances when God commands that a whole family be punished for sin, such as with the family of Achan in Joshua 7:16-26. When God deals with a whole family, it shows that there must have been some conspiracy between family members, for each is responsible for his own sin.

A Command To Be Compassionate And Fair – Verses 17-18

¹⁷ Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. ¹⁸ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

24:17-18 You shall remember: If Israel kept remembering how much God had done for them, it would make them more compassionate and fair in dealing with others. We must always deal with others remembering how much God has blessed and forgiven us.

Leave Behind Some Of The Harvest For The Poor – Verses 19-22

¹⁹ When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. ²¹ When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. ²² Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.

24:19-21 God's people were instructed to leave some of their harvest in the fields so travelers and the poor could gather it. This second gathering, called gleaning, was a way for them to provide food for themselves. Years later, Ruth obtained food for herself and Naomi by gleaning behind the reapers in Boaz's field, picking up the leftovers (Ruth 2:2). Because this law was being obeyed years after it was written, Ruth, a woman in Christ's lineage, was able to find food.