



Exodus (Part 22) – Of Laws and Love

Matt McCauley – March 19, 2017

[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in, and, like the Israelites, we still await the Promised Land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

[End of video]

Let's continue to worship God through the reading and study of his Word. If you would take your Bibles and open to Exodus, chapter 24. As you do that, let me take a brief second to introduce myself. My name is Matt McCauley, and I serve on staff here as our family minister. So, a little bit about my family. I'm married to Ashley. We've been married for about six years now, so it's getting pretty serious.

We have two boys, Gunnar, who is 1, and Wyatt, who is 3, and we love them dearly. They are our little outlaws. If the Lord blesses us with a third boy, we're just going to round out the posse and name him "Billy the Kid" and have a complete little gang in the house. We are so blessed to have them in our home.

We are in Exodus, chapter 24, as we start today. Before we do, I want to ask you a question. Have you ever agreed to something or maybe signed up for something before you knew all of the details? Okay, I'm not alone in that. I've done that twice recently. The first was with a new workout program I started on Tuesday. It's called CrossFit. It's been great. I can't bend down to tie my shoes. Putting this shirt on took me about 20 minutes this morning, but I love it. It hurts so good. That's what I tell myself over and over again.

I honestly had no idea what I was getting into when I signed up for CrossFit. I have some friends who do it and talk about how great it is, so I thought, "Oh, sure. I'm decently athletic. I'll jump in there." It has been really difficult but really, really good. I'm learning all of the moves. There's a whole language that goes with it, apparently, all of these names and terms and acronyms I have to learn. But I jumped into that and had no idea what I was signing up to be doing.

The second thing I agreed to do before really knowing all of the details was preach this weekend. About two months ago, Trevor asked if I would be interested in preaching the weekend of March 18-19. I was honored and, honestly, a little overwhelmed, but I prayed about it and said, "Absolutely. I'd love to. It would be a joy and honor to be able to do that." He said, "You'll be in the *Exodus* series, and you can just check the preaching schedule to see your passage." I said, "Great. That makes it easy. There's an assigned passage."

So I go to the teaching schedule, I look at my weekend, and I see the text that is assigned for that weekend. It says, "Exodus 20:22-24:11." That's almost five chapters, if you need me to do the math for you really quickly. There are books in the Bible that are shorter than the passage I've been assigned to preach this morning. If I were just to read through all of the verses, it would take us about 16 minutes just to get through the actual text.

So to make it easy on me, that's what we're going to do this morning. I'm just going to read all of the verses. I'll do a quick little 10-minute devo at the end, and then we'll be done. I'm kidding, but it is a lot. We have a tall mountain ahead of us this morning. It's about 116 verses of Old Testament Mosaic law. It's a lot, but I promise you, just speaking personally, after spending some time wrestling with this text and praying through this text, the view from the top of the mountain is good.

The higher the mountain the better the view. Right? You've heard that before. Even though it's going to take us some work, some work here and some work hopefully at home as you study and read for yourself, when we get to the top of the mountain we will see and hopefully know more of our good God, what he's like, as revealed in his Word. So that's what's ahead of us today.

To give us a little bit of a taste of what it's like at the top of the mountain, I'm going to read the conclusion of the passage to start. If you have your Bible, Exodus 24. We're going to start in verse 3. If you're able, I would ask that as we read the Word of God you would stand. I'm going to read, and if you would follow. This is the Word of the Lord.

"Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, 'All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.' And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD." Skip down to verse 7. "Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.'

And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.' Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank."

Powerful scene at the end of this passage. Men go up to the top of the mountain, they behold God, and then they have a meal with him. We're going to unpack all that is wrapped up in that at the end of the sermon, but before we get there, we have to start at the bottom. Let me pray for us, and then we'll jump into this passage from the beginning.

Father, we thank you for your infallible Word, for all of it, the parts we know and love and understand and the parts maybe like this passage that are a little more difficult for us to grasp and understand and see. Help us this morning as we read, as we teach and study. I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would guide us, that you would be our teacher, that you would open our eyes, that we might behold the wonderful things that are in your Word. Our hope is to know *it* so that we can know *you* more fully and better. We ask all this in Jesus' name, amen.

This section of Exodus, starting with the end of chapter 20, is commonly known as the *book of the covenant*. In the passage we just read, Exodus 24, it mentions it. It talks about this "book of the covenant" that Moses had and read. If you are a *Lord of the Rings* fan, it sounds like something straight out of Middle Earth. The book of the covenant. Very *Lord of the Rings*-ish. What it is it interprets the Ten Commandments that were just given, these laws and rules we're very familiar with. The Ten Commandments, the ten words.

The book of the covenant takes the Ten Commandments and interprets those Ten Commandments into a set of laws and rules for the people of Israel in their context and in their time period. That's

why, for us, as twenty-first century, suburban, Flower Mound Americans, when we read the laws in the book of the covenant, they hit us in some weird ways. Let me give you some examples. Some of these laws are, honestly, a little weird.

This is from the book of the covenant. **"You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."** I don't know what you had planned for lunch after this service, but if you had planned to boil a goat in its mother's milk, you might change plans and try something else. Another one. **"You shall not permit a sorceress to live."** I feel like I know a lot of people. I don't feel like I've known or met anyone who is a sorceress. I don't even think I know what exactly a sorceress is, so I'm not sure what to do with that. That law kind of hits me a little weird.

Then there are some laws in here that are honestly kind of inapplicable unless you own livestock. Your golden retriever doesn't count. That's not livestock, but I am curious. Is there anyone in the room who happens to actually own livestock? Can you raise your hand if you do? We had a few in the last one. Okay, pay attention. There are some laws in here about livestock. I need you to listen to these. These specifically deal with owning livestock.

For example, **"When a man opens a pit, or when a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls into it, the owner of the pit shall make restoration."** There you go. That might be helpful for you. Here's another one. I like this one just because of the visual picture of it. I think it's funny. **"When one man's ox butts another's, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and share its price, and the dead beast also they shall share."**

This is a law in the book of the covenant. Apparently that happened a lot. You had these oxen just getting after it and hitting each other and knocking each other over and killing each other. They needed to know what to do in that situation and in that instance whenever these animals killed one another, so you have a law for that.

Then there are some laws in here that, honestly, as I read them, I'm not quite sure what to do with them, and in some sense they come across as offensive to me, maybe to us in our context. For example, **"When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do."** Excuse me? When a man sells his daughter as a slave? This is in the law of God? I'm not sure if I'm okay with that.

How about *this* one? **"When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free..."** Again, I read that, and I'm not sure what to do with it. I'm not sure how to get past some of the words in that law. Here's another one: **"Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death."** Uh-oh. Anyone else guilty? What are we supposed to do with these laws?

It's because of things like this... This has happened to me before. If you're in a Bible reading plan and you're reading through the Scriptures and you get to passages like this, you get to these Old Testament laws, and you read about slaves and selling your daughters and oxen and donkeys and what to do in these situations, you don't really read these laws. You just kind of skim or quickly read these laws and kind of flip through that passage as fast as you can to get to the good stuff.

Have you ever done that before? I have, because I don't know what to do with them. I'm confused. I'm concerned. In some ways I'm offended, so I'm not sure what to do. These laws don't apply to me. I drive a Ford Bronco, not a donkey. I'm not sure how I'm supposed to contextualize this or what it looks like. Here's the danger in that. If we skip these or just skim these, we miss an opportunity to see and know more of who God is and what he is like.

So even though it's difficult, even though it's hard, even though it doesn't seem to make sense and these verses don't look good on a coffee cup or on a bumper sticker, they are just as inspired, just as authoritative, and just as important as John 3:16, as Romans 8:28, so we have to do the good and hard work of reading them, of listening to the Holy Spirit, of study, so that we can see and know more of God.

If we don't understand right away, that's okay. We're in good company. Did you know (this is so interesting to me) that in the New Testament, the apostle Peter talks about how the things Paul writes in his letters that are in the Bible are hard to understand? Listen to this passage. It's really helpful for me. It's encouraging to me. This is 2 Peter 3:15-18.

"And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Don't be like the ignorant and the unstable who twist the Scriptures. I'm going to give an example of how this happened with some of these laws and some of the damage and danger it led to. Don't be like that. Do the hard work. Grow in your grace and your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and grow to learn and to treasure the whole counsel of God. Not just the parts that are easy or the parts you like, but all of it, because it's all from God, about God, and for us and our good.

Think about it this way. How many of you guys are familiar with Psalm 119? Psalm 119 is a very familiar psalm. It's the longest chapter in the entire Bible, and in this psalm David is talking about, in so many different ways, his love, his appreciation for the Word of God. Over and over again, he's talking about how much he loves, how much he cherishes, how much he treasures the Word of God. Here's an example. This is verse 97. David says, "**Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.**"

"I love your law. I meditate on it day and night." Do you know what David was meditating on when he wrote that? Not Romans 8. Not John 15. David was meditating on the law of God, and he said, "I love it. I think about it day and night." So, Lord, help us get to that place where we can say the same thing about passages like this that are hard and difficult. Open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law.

With that said, let me set the scene for the giving of the book of the covenant. Chapter 20 of Exodus. Two weeks ago Matt talked about this. The Lord gives the Ten Commandments. We know the Ten Commandments. We love the Ten Commandments. Then after those are shared to the people, God calls Moses back up to the mountaintop. He has more to give. This is what he says to Moses in Exodus 21:1. "**Now these are the rules that you shall set before them.**" *Them* being the people of God, the people he had just rescued out of oppressive slavery in Egypt. He says, "These are the rules."

This word *rules* can also be translated *judgments, regulations, laws, ordinances*, or the idea of *legal decisions*. Now because our context is so far removed, like I talked about earlier, we read some of these, and some of them we think are just plain silly. Some of them we think are antiquated. Some of

them we think, "They're just so ancient. I don't know what to do with them." But as much as you might say that we've progressed in our context, if you start digging around in some of the laws that are still on the books here in the United States, there are some really silly ones. I pulled some up.

These are laws that are still written down in different places in the United States. For example, in Arizona, donkeys cannot sleep in bathtubs. Just in case your donkey wanted or asked to sleep in the bathtub. In Delaware, you are forbidden to sell the hair of a dog. I don't know why you would, but you can't. In Wyoming, it is illegal to remove more than half of a sheep's ear. When I found that one, I had this mental picture in my mind of all of these earless sheep finally getting this law passed and going, "Praise God! We get to keep at least half of it." I don't know why that's in there, but it is.

All of these are about animals. This one has to have a story behind it. I wish I knew it. In Alabama, it is illegal to wrestle a bear. Don't ask and don't try. If you survive, you're going to jail. So those are laws about animals. In the book of the covenant there are some laws about women. Here are some laws that are still on the books in different parts of the United States concerning women.

In Michigan, a woman is not allowed to cut her own hair without her husband's permission. In the rest of the 49 states, there's an unspoken law that says a husband is not allowed to cut *his* own hair without his wife's permission. At least in *my* house that's how it goes. In Florida, it is illegal to fall asleep under a hair dryer in a salon. I guess that happened and it went really badly, so they decided to put a law in place about it.

In Charlotte, North Carolina, you must be covered or clothed in at least 16 yards of fabric before going out into public. I'm no seamstress, but I've watched enough *Project Runway* with my wife to know that 16 yards of fabric is a lot of material. You're basically going out in a tent if you have to follow and obey this law. Then finally, in Memphis, Tennessee, a woman cannot drive a car unless there is a man with a red flag in front of her warning the other people on the road.

Obviously, thankfully, these laws are no longer enforced, but at some point in time somebody thought it would be a good idea to make this a law and to put it on the books. We laugh, but they were in the books. They were laws at some point. So let's slow down as we read some of these laws the Israelites were given, and let's consider why they were put in place. If we were to fly over this whole passage, the book of the covenant, we would find that there are approximately 50 laws, so 50 specific crimes or offenses, and then an appropriate punishment for that crime or that offense.

If your Bible is like mine, it divides them for you in some helpful sections. Mine divided these laws into six sections. There are laws concerning slaves and servants; there are laws concerning injury, murder, or other physical harm; there are laws concerning restitution; there are laws concerning personal and public holiness; there are laws concerning social justice; and there are laws concerning the Sabbath and other festivals.

All of these laws, every single one of them, have at their heart, at their root, two things: the idea of "What does it look like to love God, to be the people of God?" and "What does it look like to love your neighbor?" So how do I love God and how do I love my neighbor? A slow careful read of these laws reveals God's heart.

What's really interesting is that almost half of them, so over 20 of these laws, are written specifically and deal specifically with segments and portions of the population that were particularly, in this context and this time period, vulnerable: the oppressed, the weak, the poor, those who were commonly victims in this time period.

Over 20 of these laws have been put in place for them. I don't have time to tackle all of them, but I thought it would be helpful for us to take two of the laws that, as we read them, can seem offensive and to show us how these laws were not repressive or restrictive but were a gift, a blessing to those who were vulnerable.

The first one I want us to look at is Exodus, chapter 21, starting in verse 2. **"When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him."** If you're like me, you start to read this law, and you get to about the fourth or fifth word and get caught.

You get stuck because of this word *slave*, and you miss the rest of this law, because the context you or I know in terms of slavery is one of involuntary, ethnically based, lifelong, abusive servitude. Slavery that I know because of our nation's history catches me in this verse, and I just can't get past the rest of it, but what we need to know is that the context our nation has known in terms of slavery is not the context the Israelites knew and that this law concerned and covered.

It was not the sinful kidnapping or forceful removal of a person, the stripping of their personhood and rights. In fact, the act that our nation knows in terms of slavery is banned later on in these laws.

What's really sad is that in our nation's history you had men, just like Peter was talking about, who were ignorant and unstable, and they would take passages like this that dealt with slaves and twist those passages to justify a sinful behavior, like the slavery our nation knows in its history.

What I'm grateful for is that there were other men and women who knew more of their Bible who would use it to lead the charge to end the slavery that our nation knew. Look at passages like Exodus 21:16 further down. This law says, **"Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death."**

In this group of people God had established and rescued, if you steal someone, if you kidnap them against their will and try to sell them to someone else, not only do you die but whoever purchased them dies as well. It is clear that it is not the same type of slavery we know, so let's not let this word trip us up. In fact, other translations will help. They will translate this word a little bit differently. They will translate this word as either *servant* or *worker*.

In these times, in ancient Israel, there was no corporation. There were no businesses. If you worked for someone, you worked for a household cottage or a household industry. When you were their employee, you contracted with that person or that family, and they owned rights to your labor. They didn't own you as a person, but in a sense, they owned rights to what you did. You served them. They contracted you and your labor.

There are two modern equivalents of what this form of servitude was like that we know and experience but probably never connect. The first one is professional sports. The second one is the military. Let me unpack this a little bit. These are things I pulled out of the news this week dealing with professional sports. I want you to listen to the phrasing and notice the similarities in some of the words used in these sentences and the sentences we just read in these laws about servants.

"Are the Cowboys going to release Romo? Will he be a free agent or is he going to be traded to Denver or Houston? Who wants to buy him?" We read those and those don't trip us up, because we know what is happening there. Those teams don't own him. They don't own his person, but they do own exclusive rights to his abilities and skills, and those cannot be used for any other team. They didn't purchase *him*, but they purchased his work, his labor. So that's one example.

Another example is the military. When you enlist into the military, they don't own you in the sense that you lose all personal privileges and protective rights. You are not their slave. Now some in the

military might disagree and say otherwise. "I don't know. It's not exactly..." But the truth is you have voluntarily contracted with them for a predetermined period of time to perform services and tasks, and a break from that contract on your end has serious consequences. In a very real sense the military owns you, but they don't own *you*.

Israel's slave laws should be understood in terms of this, their own history. It's helpful to think about the history they had known coming out of Egypt, an oppressive, involuntary slavery. These recently rescued slaves who had just been led out of Egypt heard these laws dealing with slaves and servants, and they were a refuge to them. "You mean my family can't be broken up? If I come in with a wife, I leave with a wife? You mean if my owner, if my master, if my employer is abusive to me there are consequences to him?"

Once we get past that, we see how these laws directed toward these servants, these slaves, were a refuge. They were a blessing to them. They were a gift to them, and they taught the people of God how to love one another. Another example of these laws that appear offensive to us deals specifically with women. In chapter 21, look at verse 7.

"When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her.

If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money."

From our twenty-first century perspective, we get to that first sentence and think, "How in the world could a culture treat women in this way? 'When a man sells his daughter as a slave...'" Before we judge too quickly... I started thinking about this. I bet if we plucked one of these Israelites out of his or her context and put him or her into ours, they might think some of the same things about things *we* do in our culture. For example, I'm watching a show. An Israelite walks in. "Hey, what are you watching?"

"Oh, it's a show. I really like it. Love this show."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, it's great. They take 25 women and put them all in a house together, and then they make them compete against one another for the romantic affections of just one man. Twenty-four of them will get rejected. One of them might make it and become his wife. Millions of people watch this, and we love it." The Israelite goes, "Are you kidding me? You do that?" So let's not be too quick to judge one culture, one context, based on our culture and our context.

So why did God allow men to sell their daughters to the service of another? Well, the father was not trying to get rid of her or to profit off of her. He was trying to improve her prospects for both provision and potentially marriage. You have a poor man who can barely provide for himself, for his wife, for his children. Their hopes for prosperity are bleak and limited. In this culture, in this context, a poor man could send his daughter to a rich home in hopes that she would be part of that family, grafted in through marriage.

Within this context, God gives special protection for women in this situation, the passage we just read. There's protection in three ways. If the arrangement didn't work out, if the man changes his mind, he couldn't just get rid of her. He couldn't just sell her off to a foreign nation. If she became engaged to one of the sons, she was to be treated as a daughter. She would have full rights as a daughter in that family.

Then if the engagement ended or if the man took an additional wife, which was common in that culture, even though she might be a second wife, she could not be treated as a second-class wife. That man was obligated to provide for her both food, clothing, and marital rights in every way. So these laws protected these women in this context. They were a refuge to them and for them.

Not only women, not only servants within these laws, but there were others who were protected...the poor, widows and orphans, the sojourner. Exodus 22:21: **"You shall not wrong a sojourner [a refugee] or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt."** There were even laws in the book of the covenant to protect the unborn. I don't have time to read the law, but I want to unpack it for you this morning.

There was a law in the book of the covenant that said if two men were fighting, or striving, and one of them hit a pregnant woman and that woman because of that injury either miscarried or that baby

came early and had a deformity or some kind of injury, there were consequences to the man who committed that offense. If that baby died in the womb or was miscarried, that man was to be killed. If that baby came out with any kind of deformity, that man would receive the same kind of deformity.

This is where we get the idea of tooth for tooth, eye for eye. It comes from that law, and it was specifically given to give value and worth and protection to those still in the womb. So as we read these laws, do you see how we get a picture of God and what he cares about, what was important to him, what he valued? The lowly were lifted up, the poor were valued, the weak found strength, and the vulnerable and oppressed were given refuge.

The question for us is...*What are we supposed to do with them?* We study them, read them, and hopefully understand them. What is the application for us in passages like this, like the book of the covenant? Well, before we try to make application for the passage, we must first understand the greater purpose for the law of God. Why was the law given?

There's a common tendency for us to disregard the law as believers because we think the law was given as a means to salvation. Because it failed... It was plan A and didn't work. God sent Jesus (plan B), so I don't need this law. I chuck it out the window. That is wrong. The law was never given and never intended to be a means unto salvation. It wasn't plan A. Jesus has always been plan A from the beginning, the foundations of the earth, for our salvation. It never was intended to be through the law.

Listen to Galatians, chapter 3, verse 11. **"Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"** Salvation has been and always will be by faith and faith alone. If you know your Bible, Hebrews 11 is not called the "hall of works." It's the "hall of faith." All of these men and women, pre-Christ, were given the law. They weren't saved through obedience to the law; they were saved by their faith. It was their faith that was counted to them as righteousness.

The law was never intended to be a means unto salvation, so let's not throw it out because we think it was. Instead, we get the reason for the law from Paul in Galatians 3:19. **"Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions..."** The law was added because of transgressions. We sinned. We fell short of God's glory, so God instituted the law to repress and hold back sin. It was given because of transgressions.

If an analogy is helpful, the Bible gives us this analogy of parenting to help us understand the purpose and intention behind the law. This is in Galatians 3 again. **"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian...in order that we might be justified by faith."** You can also insert that word... The law was our *parent*. The law was our guardian.

Let me give you an example in my own home. I have two young boys, so in my home we have some laws. We have some really specific rules for my boys, because they need them. One of them is that when we're out somewhere, you don't leave my sight. You don't leave your mom's sight. I have a 3-year-old who is very adventurous, very curious, and tends to get himself into some tricky situations, so we have instituted a law that says, "Hey, don't leave my sight. This is for your good." He is under that law.

Another law in my home that he is under is that you don't open the pantry or the refrigerator without permission. Why does he need that law? Because on his own he will eat goldfish until he vomits, and he will drink milk until he vomits. He doesn't have that kind of self-control, so he needs a law. He needs to be under a law for his good, for his protection, that says, "Hey, ask permission."

Now he's 3. I'm hoping that when he's 30 those are laws he is no longer under. Those are laws he does not need anymore because he has grown up, matured. He does not need to ask permission to leave my sight, because he knows how to be aware of his surroundings. He knows how to be safe. When he's 30, he doesn't have to ask permission to open the pantry, because he knows how to eat right and well and not in a way that will make him sick.

Listen to how Paul closes out this thought in Galatians 3, verse 25. **"But now that faith has come [now that we've grown up], we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."** Do you see the transition? Before Christ, we were under the law. Now that Christ has come and we've grown up, we're not under the law. The law says it has been written on our hearts. It's not something that sits over us. Hopefully it's something that's written on our hearts that comes out of us.

John Piper says it something like this, speaking to believers. "We aren't under the law, because hopefully the law is in us, coming out, because it has been written on our hearts. Instead of serving

the law, we serve the Spirit and one another in love." When it comes to the law like this, the book of the covenant, don't throw it out. Don't skim it. Don't skip it. It helps us to serve one another in love.

So what does love look like? The Bible is going to tell us. It says love is keeping the commandments. It goes back to the law. Listen to 1 John 5:2. **"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome."**

Romans 13:8: **"Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law."** Romans 3:31: **"Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law."** For the believer, you are not under the righteous requirement of the law. Jesus has fulfilled that and done that for you. Your aim should be to fulfill it like he did.

We don't throw it out. We receive it like Moses. We love it like David. We practice it like Solomon. We devour it like Ezekiel and Jeremiah to find that it is sweeter than honey, and we treasure it like Job. We seek to have the same heart for God as reflected in his holy law by loving our neighbor as ourselves.

So good questions. Application from this passage for the believer. What is your heart for the vulnerable, the oppressed, the voiceless, the powerless, the weak, and the meek? Do you receive the sojourner and serve your enemy? Are you honest in your dealings? May the cry of the Israelites upon receiving this law be our cry as well. "Lord, all that you have spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

Then for the unbeliever. First, I want to thank you for being here. Whether a friend invited you or the Lord just put it on your heart to come this morning, I'm so grateful you are in this room with us this morning. What I want you to hear is that these laws that seem oppressive and restrictive were actually the opposite. They were life giving. They were a refuge to those who were under them and to those who received them.

For you, in the same way, the idea of submitting your life to Jesus, submitting your life to his rule and reign might feel like a laying down, like a loss of some freedoms, but, friend, hear me. The Bible is going to say that you are already a slave. The Bible is going to say that you are a slave to sin and to Satan. You both choose sin and have no choice when it comes to sin.

The Bible tells us that the end of sin, the end of that path... The wages of sin are death and destruction. I want to encourage you this morning, friend, if you're not a believer in Christ, to reject that master, to repent of sin, and to turn and give your life to Jesus and be the most happy, free slave ever. His rule and reign are good and right and perfect for you. That's my prayer for you this morning. I want to close with a passage I read at the beginning, Exodus 24:7-11.

"Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.'"

If you're a visual person, you get to that part about Moses sprinkling blood on people, and you get a little grossed out. I'm okay with Moses sprinkling it on the altar. I'm cool with that, but the moment he turns around and starts spraying that stuff on me, I'm out. Right? I'm already grabbing the hand sanitizer. I see some moms reaching for those essential oils, like, "Not *my* kids. We just got over the flu. I don't want any of that ox blood on my kids."

Before we jump too quickly to a conclusion, when we see and grasp and understand what was happening in that moment, it's a beautiful picture. It's that moment in a wedding when the bride and groom, looking at each other with every ounce of energy and passion they have in their hearts, say to one another, "I do. No matter what comes, I do. I covenant with you. You are mine. I am yours. Nothing will change that. Nothing will separate us."

When Moses takes the blood, sprinkles it on the altar, and then turns and sprinkles it on the people... They're covered in the blood of his covenant, and then they get to go up. Sprinkled in that blood, they go up to the top of the mountain. They see God, they behold God, they have a meal with him, and they live to tell about it. Tim Chester, in his commentary about the book of Exodus says, "This is salvation: to eat with God."

When we understand that, when that hits me and I realize what is happening in that moment, as a believer, I feel like Peter when Jesus is washing his feet. Jesus does that and Peter is confused, and then he understands what is happening in that moment, and Peter goes, "Lord, don't stop at my feet. Wash all of me. Cover all of me with that sacrificial, atoning, saving, forgiving blood, that I

might go up on the mountain, behold you, dine with you, and live to tell about it." I want to close reading a hymn, and I would ask you to close your eyes as I do.

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Nothing can for sin atone:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
Naught of good that I have done:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
This is all my righteousness:
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

O precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know;
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

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