

June 12, 2022

“Live as God’s Just People”
Lesson 2 of Unit

Levit. 19:9-18, 33-37

Intro

For Christians, the sin-debt we owed has been paid by Christ. The question is asked in Ps. 116:12, “How can I repay the Lord for all His goodness to me?” And the answer is, of course, “There is no way!” Though God does not expect us to nor call us to repay the debt we owe, we are called to do good works (Eph. 2:10). We do these good works in gratitude to God because we have been saved, not as a repayment for our salvation. This allows us to be people who show the world what God has done for us.

This is not an idea unique to the New Testament era. God has always expected His people to behave in ways that reflect His nature. Our service to God cannot be reduced to a spiritual ceremony (OT) or to going to church alone (NT). Rather, our service to God takes form as a life ordered in every way according to His justice.

In Lev. 19:2, before our study passage, God tells Moses to tell the people, “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” God called Israel to live a particular way because that life reflects His holiness. To imitate God isn’t to try to flatter Him—He isn’t like us! Living in accord with God’s nature is done because we are made in His image and it is what is best for us. It allows us to “go with the flow” of how God designed the universe, rather than continually fighting against it.

Read Lev. 19:9-18

1. vs. 9-10: God calls on justice for “the poor and the alien”

He doesn’t call attention to why they are in need (bad choices, hard times, etc)

He says that His people are to help them

The land isn’t the people’s private property—it is God’s property

He calls them to leave some food on the vines, and to leave alone that which has fallen

The poor can then gather enough to feed themselves from what is left

2. vs. 11: The three commands here are God’s call to deal honestly with each other

Do not lie, do not steal—these are pretty easy for us to tell if we’re following them

Do not deceive one another is a little trickier

Could saying “I’m busy” to avoid a call to do something being deceptive?

Is putting on a happy face to pretend a conflict doesn’t exist being deceptive?

It’s something to think about

Christians are humans, so we don’t always think the same about many things

Conflicts and struggles are likely to happen

God calls us to be honest and straightforward with each other

Our text says it well: *“If God’s people cannot be forthright with one another, why should the world think Christ’s truth is uniquely mediated through us?”*

3. vs. 12: “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.”
 LORD means “Yahweh” which means “I am”
 He is an actual being, not just an idea
 He has revealed Himself to us, sometimes through others, sometimes through His recorded words.
 This verse reveals that His name is important
- To “profane” God’s name means more than using it as a swear word
 It means not to use it in any way that is contrary to who He is, to His nature / character
 We are not to use His name lightly or frivolously
 When we do refer to Him, we must use it sincerely and with full intention
4. vs. 13: Two things are stated here about dealing justly in money matters
 “Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him”
 To defraud means to cheat someone knowingly
 Saying the damage to your fence was twice the cost it actually was....
 Robbing your neighbor is meant in the same sense as defrauding
 How can we love our neighbor as ourselves if we are trying to cheat them?
- “Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight”
 This doesn’t apply as exactly to us as it would have in OT times
 Laborers then were paid at the end of each day’s work
 To not pay them at that time was to misuse and mistreat them
 Followers of God are to deal justly with money owed to a worker
 This verse is from Leviticus; the problem still existed in NT times
 Jesus says “Do not defraud” in Mark 10:19
 James 5:4 talks about laborers whose pay has been withheld
5. vs. 14: God here warns against taking advantage of or mistreating those with disabilities
 A person who curses at a person known to be deaf (hope he can’t read lips!)
 A person who puts obstacle in front of a blind person (and takes pleasure in that...)
 People who do these things show no fear of God at all
 A person who knows and fears God knows that He sees everything
 God will reward those who have done kindnesses to “the least of these”
 All persons are deserving of dignified treatment in God’s eyes
 I John 4:20 says, “for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”
6. vs. 15: This verse touches on an idea prevalent in last week’s lesson—God’s not having any preferential treatment for anyone, whether rich or poor.
 Here—“do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great”
 Judge your neighbor (read “all other people) fairly
7. vs. 16: Though the two halves of this verse may seem different, they are connected
 First, don’t spread lies/slander
 Second is why: it could endanger your neighbor’s life
 God holds us accountable for malicious words, but for idle/careless ones as well.

8. vs. 17-18: The verse says, “Do not hate your brother”

It goes on to develop an escalating scale of behaviors to accomplish this

It begins by cautioned us to not hate “in your heart”

Our thoughts/feelings are where most sin begins

First step—don’t hate in your heart

Next, we are to rebuke our neighbor frankly

If we see someone doing something wrong and don’t tell them, we could share in that person’s guilt as well...

Correcting someone is a very high form of love

Is shows concern for the other person, a desire for improvement

Next, we are warned to not bear grudges against one another

It’s easier to forgive than to forget, for many of us

It’s been said that holding a grudge is like you drinking poison so the other person will die

In other words, a grudge poisons you, not the one you’re “grudging”

Finally, we are told to “love your neighbor as yourself”

This is the logical outcome of all these other admonitions

We want our neighbor to love us, not hate us, not hold a grudge against us

We want them to care about us enough to point out something we’re doing wrong

God’s people are called to show this justice to the world, so they will see what God is like

Read Lev. 19:33-37

1. vs. 33-34: This verse is an extension of vs. 18

Do not mistreat an alien living among you; “must be treated as one of your native-born”

The Israelites, and God’s people today, are called to love strangers in the same way they love one another

The Israelites were reminded that they were foreigners in Egypt; they were mistreated

Because of that experience, God says they must not do the same in their land

It would be easy to see this as an Israelite / OT only experience

God’s justice calls for all people to be treated as a neighbor, as you would treat yourself

It is a higher and more challenging call

2. vs. 35-36: Here, God tells the Israelites to use honesty and justice in measurements

An ephah is a dry measure, about 6/10 of a bushel

A hin is a liquid measure, of about a gallon

Twice in Proverbs (11:1, 20:23), it says it’s an abomination to God to use dishonest scales

God’s justice must be shown in concrete acts—love in action

The alien (see vs.33-34) were more vulnerable to this type of injustice

They had no family connections, no one a merchant would fear

3. vs. 37: God instructs his people to “keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them”

This isn’t in order to earn God’s favor

This is about God making them people after His own heart

God can use people who think and act like Him

The key word is “all”

God's standards are not optional, not a pick-and-choose of life principles
It is a complete way of life
As such, no part of human life is outside God's view and jurisdiction

Application: This passage calls followers to God's standards spiritually. Eight times the phrase "I am the Lord" or some variation of it appears. God is in charge, the one who knows best. But personal submission to His lordship isn't just about loving Him. A right relationship with God must include a right relationship with others. Serving Him requires loving one another, the alien as well as the brother. We are called to do for one another what God would do if He were here personally.

Prayer: Father God, we recognize and confess that the life of justice you call us to may demand more than we are willing to give at times. Soften our hearts, open our eyes, and move our hands and feet into action for those around us. Replace our selfishness and our fears with simple obedience, which is what you require of us. In Jesus' name, Amen.