



EXODUS

FROM BONDAGE TO FREEDOM

BIBLE TEXT | EXODUS 21:1-32

1 “Now these are the rules that you shall set before them. **2** When you buy a Hebrew slave, he shall serve six years, and in the seventh he shall go out free, for nothing. **3** If he comes in single, he shall go out single; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him. **4** If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out alone. **5** But if the slave plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,' **6** then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door or the doorpost. And his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall be his slave forever.

7 “When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. **8** 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. **9** If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. **10** If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. **11** And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

12 “Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death. **13** But if he did not lie in wait for him, but God let him fall into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place to which he may flee. **14** But if a man willfully attacks another to kill him by cunning, you shall take him from my altar, that he may die.

15 “Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death.

16 “Whoever steals a man and sells him, and anyone found in possession of him, shall be put to death.

17 “Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death.



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18 “When men quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and the man does not die but takes to his bed, **19** then if the man rises again and walks outdoors with his staff, he who struck him shall be clear; only he shall pay for the loss of his time, and shall have him thoroughly healed.

20 “When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a rod and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged.

21 But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money.

22 “When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman’s husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. **23** But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, **24** eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, **25** burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

26 “When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. **27** If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.

28 “When an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall not be liable. **29** But if the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has been warned but has not kept it in, and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and its owner also shall be put to death. **30** If a ransom is imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him. **31** If it gores a man’s son or daughter, he shall be dealt with according to this same rule. **32** If the ox gores a slave, male or female, the owner shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.



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DEVOTIONAL FOR EXODUS 21:1-32

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I'll be honest with you, when I first saw this passage assigned to me I was not very confident in how I was going to write a devotional on it. Laws on slavery, murder, and assault, not exactly my first choice for writing topics. As I dove into the text, though, I began to understand and even get excited to learn more about the laws of the Old Testament. Two major things stuck out to me through this passage. First, I saw God's great provision for His people and His wonderful plan for us. Second, I am so grateful that we don't live under the old laws anymore and that we have the grace of God through our wonderful Savior.

At first glance, the laws in Exodus can seem pretty harsh. "Whoever curses his father or his mother shall be put to death (verse 17)" and "eye for eye, tooth for tooth (verse 24)" seem pretty harsh to us now, especially through the lens of grace. When we dig deeper though, we see that these rules were actually put into place for two reasons, to protect God's people and to remind the people of God's authority in their lives. Most ancient codes in the Near East like the Code of Hammurabi were actually much more harsh than God's law. God used cities of refuge, a "place to which he may flee" (verse 13), as a way to show mercy on those guilty of manslaughter where in surrounding nations they would likely be put to death. When God told the people "eye for eye, tooth for tooth", it was actually to protect them from greater retaliations. It could be rephrased as ONLY an eye for an eye, ONLY a tooth for a tooth. I can tell you in watching my three year old play with her friends, the natural reaction in our flesh when someone pushes you down or accidentally hits you is to pop back up and hit them back harder. In Matthew 5:38-42 we see Jesus use "eye for an eye" as an example and then take it a step further. Instead of an eye for an eye, we should turn the other cheek. This was a particularly radical idea because of how much further it goes than our human nature, but that's what God's grace in our life does.

The image you probably get when I say the word slavery is very different than the Israelites version of slavery. While slavery in surrounding nations often was for their whole life and not by choice, Israelite slavery is equated more to indentured servitude and was almost always arranged or chosen. It was often to pay off a debt owed and was of limited duration (6 years). God's plan for His people was not to live a life as slaves, but as free men and women. This points to our lives in Christ. If you are an unbeliever, you are living the life of a slave. You are a slave to your sinful human nature. Just as God's best plan for the Israelites was to live a life of freedom, God's desire for us is to live in freedom as well. We do not have to be enslaved to our flesh. He has given us a way to be set free, to break the chains of bondage to our sinful nature. What a wonderful gift God gave us in sending his Son as our redeemer, that we can live our lives in freedom. (Romans 6:16-23)



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Questions:

1. What is an area of your life where you are struggling to turn the other cheek? What are some practical steps you could take in this?
2. Do you sometimes struggle to see God's plan as the best plan for your life? Read 1 Samuel 8. Can you relate to the Israelites? What is an area of your life that you need to surrender control in and trust that God's way is the best way and will ultimately lead you into freedom?
3. Are you still living your life in bondage to your sins? If you want to learn more about freedom in Christ email us at pastoraloffice@stonepointchurch.com