

STUDY 14

Leviticus 25:43

You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God.

Read the context: Leviticus 25:39-43

What kind of person is being dealt with in this paragraph (verse 39): One of your _____ who becomes _____. What is he compelled to do because of his circumstances?

In what way is such a person not to be treated and in what way should he/she be treated (verses 39b-40)? The Year of Jubilee occurred every 50 years (see Leviticus 25:8-17). It was a year of release, of freedom, of restoration. In a sense it reset the culture and gave everyone a fresh start, leveling the playing field once again.

What does God claim about His people in verse 42? God is possessive over His people. He takes us as His own. Essentially He is saying, “Don’t mess with my people. They are to be treated with dignity because they are Mine.”

According to the verse for today, how are these servants not to be treated? What does this imply about how servants were probably thought of and how they were treated? We can see from this the propensity of human nature to take advantage of others, to act haughtily toward others, to put others down and treat them with contempt, and even to be cruel to others – and to feel perfectly justified in doing so.

As with the 2 previous verses in Leviticus 25, what is to act as a deterrent to cultural norms and the dark side of our human nature?

Deuteronomy 24:10-15 gives very specific commands regarding treatment of the poor. In this passage there are 3 verse couplets; each of the 2-verse sections focuses on a particular situation, each giving first a negative prohibition and then a positive action item. These sets of situation/prohibition/action show us the heart posture or attitudes we should have toward the poor. For each couplet of verses (10-11, 12-13, 14-15), list the situation, prohibition, action and then think through what attitudes would be conveyed to the poor person by following these guidelines.

The fear of the Lord digs down deep to the heart of our inner attitudes which are revealed in our actions. Are we respectful, thoughtful, considerate, caring, and understanding of others, especially those in lower circumstances than our own who are needy? Do we put ourselves in their shoes and feel what they feel?

It’s easy to see from these Scriptures why Jesus would say that the whole law hangs on 2 commands: Love God and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-40). Paul reiterated

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this in Romans 13:8-10, saying that the whole law toward our fellow man could be summed up in the one command to love your neighbor as yourself. He went on to say that the whole law is fulfilled in one word: Love. That is the heart of God. That is where the fear of the Lord takes us.

And that, I think, is the essential message of I John. This is how we know that we know God: Love. For God is love. Someone might say, "No, I John is about obeying God; this is how we know that we know God: Obedience." And that would be true. But let us not forget that the obedience He is clearly calling us to is Love.

If you have time, read through I John out loud. (It takes about 17 minutes.) There's an interesting fear twist in it.

Love is of God. Pray for His nature to be breathed into you.

Add to your Fear of the Lord list any new thoughts from today's study.