

Restoration, Repayment, and Ransom (Exodus 21:24-22:4)

Preached January 28, 2024, by Pastor Phil Layton (www.gcb.church)

In the year 2011 a Neo-Nazi and self-described fascist murdered 77 people in Norway.

- Most of the victims were teens at a summer camp gunned down by Anders Breivik.
- For the 77 lives he shot and bombed, Norwegian law sentenced him to 21 years in prison.
- That's the max time for any crime in Norway, even for its bloodiest day since WWII.

The worst mass shooting by one gunman in modern western history but 21 years is their max

- This month in 2024 he's suing Norway for his 'human rights' and to end his confinement.
- Access to TV, kitchen, sports, and other privileges aren't enough human rights, he says
 - o but he's still got 8 more years (only?).

Some governments don't bring justice to killers, but many governments kill unjustly

In other parts of the world this century, many cultures multiply revenge and 'honor killings.'

- In some places you can be executed even for disrespecting a man or Mohammed.
- Hostages are held by terrorists for ransom and massive prices are paid.
- Some people put in slavery for the smallest of crimes and no protections against abuse.
- Men beat women or workers like animals, and schools teach kids we're evolved animals.
- To some westerners, 'animal rights' are the same as human rights, unborn animals more?
- But what if your animal kills a human being? That's a question for today.
- What if a thief gets hurt robbing people--should he be able to sue and win?
- Many thefts aren't prosecuted anymore but bad people prosecute good people and win.

When men are convicted of crimes, should tax dollars cover loss, or can they pay back society?

- Do we look to God's law or governments or insurance to hold accountable negligence?

Please turn in God's Word to Ex 21 where God's wisdom speaks to all of that

We've been studying through Exodus and seen for murder, God calls for 'life for life.'

- Chap 21 also said any who steal or sell slaves or hostages or kill unborn life should die.
- v. 24 is a famous principle of biblical justice: the law's penalties must fit the crime.

It's been said this *eye for eye / tooth for tooth* 'principle does not imply that punishment was carried out by inflicting bodily injury in kind, but that punishment for harm to a person is to be commensurate with the harm done, not greater as revenge dictates, nor less as indulgence desires...It is, rather, the principle of equal justice for all, regardless of who they are and what their status is...the law mandates financial compensation equivalent to the severity...It must not exceed the injury.'¹

21:24: *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.*

That was a serious loss to a master who seriously hurt a vulnerable worker

- v. 24 doesn't mean what he does to your eye or tooth you do back.

It's not a literal formula for physical revenge, it's for fair remuneration and limiting retaliation.

- In v. 26-27 if a slave lost an eye or tooth in abuse, he's free (financial blow to bad boss).
- For *slave*, think indentured servant paying off debt (not U.S. slavery).
- As I read 'ox,' think animal or valuable work/transportation.

Israelite farmers might ride oxen, but think of vehicles we ride today and keeping others safe.

- If your dog attacks or you drive drunk, ignoring warnings, cause people to die
- or property damage by what you own, this gives principles of criminal liability:

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.

We’re not OT Israelites under a theocracy with slavery, but this has principles of equity

In v. 28 the owner wasn’t liable but it seems to be more for a vulnerable slave, additional paid?

- Why kill the ox? For one, so they never again kill an image-bearer.
- In Gen 9:5 God said ‘for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it...for God made man in his own image.’

Human life must not to be taken wrongly or recklessly, even by animals, ‘life for life’ applies.

Is it ok then to kill someone else’s animals, even accidentally by what you do carelessly?

³³ “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, ³⁴ the owner of the pit shall make **restoration**. He shall give money to its owner, and the dead beast shall be his. ³⁵ “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. ³⁶ Or if it is known that the ox has been accustomed to gore in the past, and its owner has not kept it in, he shall **repay** ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his. **22:1** “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. ² If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, ³ but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. ⁴ If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

We’re not under Israel’s judicial law except for its ‘general equity’ (WCF 19.4)²

Today I won’t focus on the gory details of goring oxen. The bigger picture is biblical principles.

- When a wrong happens, what’s the right response?
- How should one repay for theft or death?
- Families around us have been impacted by tragedy, manslaughter or multi-car accidents.
- How you keep others safe on your property or on the road is a biblical issue.

It’s not just a criminal issue. I’ve heard there are people who drive distracted (hypothetically).

- Some don’t heed police warnings. Are you keeping other people safe?
- Do you have insurance for damages to others?

In recent months across our State, intruders breaking and entering have been shot dead.

Defending your home in the dark from armed robbers doesn’t bring bloodguilt.

- But it says if it’s broad daylight, you can see he’s not armed, more liability (police, too).

So this isn’t obscure obsolete law from ancient times, these principles are timely to our times.

- People here have been stolen from greatly or lost a loved one to a reckless car.
- Good people here face bad situations or court at times to settle liability from the past.
- It was a sad day when we put down our dog for principles in this text (unsafe).
- As a kid I cried in Old Yeller (a rabid pet dies so people don’t).
- In 2013 a city of L.A. animal shelter was found liable for gross negligence.
- A volunteer wasn’t told a dog had bitten its prior owner who called the dog a threat.
- She wasn’t gored but she was badly torn by bites, nearly died,
- and the city paid dearly for not handling warnings responsibly.³

She survived but others die each year from attacks by animals owned by others

Last year also a judge denied parole to a SF dog owner in jail serving 15 years to life.

- Their big dog was known to be aggressive, attacking in the past, owners were warned.
- After it mauled the neighbor to death, the owner was convicted of 2nd degree murder.⁴
- Laws call for fenced cattle so they don't wander on the road and cause a fatal crash.
- Laws call for fences around pools so that a young son or daughter doesn't drown in it.

Ex 21 talks about open pits not covered and we may not have that, but we may have open pools.

- We need to heed safety signs and warning lights in vehicles or more damage comes.
- **The main point isn't animals, it's valuable human life.**

And the NT says the law is our tutor to lead to Christ, so we'll get there

We're responsible to value life is the point under 3 subpoints: restoration, repayment, ransom.

Those 3 key words in our text summarize it: 1. restoration (21:34 '...shall make restoration...')

2. repayment (v. 36b '...he shall repay...')

3. ransom (v. 30: 'if a ransom is imposed...')

Restoration starts in v. 26-27 with what to do when you can't restore (destroyed eye or tooth).

- Because human life is valuable to God, He calls for restored freedom to injured slaves.
- God's law restored the sanctity and dignity of all life in a world that dehumanized slaves.
- God's image is restored in His law.
- Man's law in Bible times allowed brutal beatings or damaging slaves like property law.
- God's law made any slave a free man for that and let any slave flee a bad master.

Ancient and American laws required runaway slaves to be returned. Dt 23:15-16 "*Do not return a slave to his master when he has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶ Let him live among you wherever he wants within your gates. Do not mistreat him*" (HCSB, other versions "not wrong/oppress" a runaway seeking refuge)

Think indentured bond-servants not treated right, they could flee and be free, restored

Jewish writer 'Cassuto writes the Torah is the only ancient law code that includes a punishment for mistreating a slave. In all other codes, a man would not be punished for harming a slave any more than...some inanimate object he owned. The Torah, in contrast...was morally superior to ...[modern U.S. law, too, in 1860, ex: v. 20]...owners who killed a slave were to be executed.'⁵

v. 16 executed slave-traders or slave-owners from a captured system like the U.S. did

In v. 28-29 any human being killed by an animal had a process of liability.

- But in v. 32 there was an extra penalty for a slave worker in a compensation case.

An ox was a lot of money the owner lost for its work and food (can't eat it if it killed a man).

- But if it took work from another away, too, there's a massive fine if it took a slave's life.
- All life is precious, to be protected.

In v. 32 the extra 30 shekels was above and beyond other ancient laws (20 shekels in Gen 37).

- Israel's law set the value higher at 30 for a max contract of 6 years.
- 30 shekels was big money, for that price you could buy real estate (a potter's field).
- So you not only lost a highly valuable ox,⁶

- o but your ability to buy land could be lost if it took the life of someone's worker.

Laws like that made you control your ox and be extra careful when workers are around!

Our working world is different today, but this may be the first workman's comp law?

It's right that a worker seriously or permanently hurt on a job gets just compensation.

- It's right to have rights protecting persons, property, safety from negligence or accidents.
- Hammurabi's Code said one expected control of a goading ox was to cut its horns (250).
- But in other ancient laws a negligent owner of a dangerous animal only paid a fine
 - o if his animal killed a human.

- God's Law put a negligent owner's life on the line because of the sanctity of human life.
- To recklessly not protect human life in God's image could cost yours.

Be extra careful with your home, on the road or around the vulnerable, the poor, elderly, little kids

Why does v. 31 have to say it's the same rule for a son or daughter? In other ancient law codes 'if a man's ox killed another man's son or daughter, then the son or daughter of the ox's owner would be killed...[God's law says no, the] owner alone...is punished, not his son or daughter'⁷

Dt 24:16 says children must not be put to death for their father's sin

In v. 35 moves from a cow killing a neighbor's cow to restoration and right relations.

- If you've ever heard of 'the horns of a dilemma,' a cow's goring horns were a dilemma!
- If it's a 'no fault gore,' it says both owners share the cow (big BBQ fellowship together).
- The live cow was sold and they share the proceeds to help restore the loss.

But v. 33, a donkey falls in your unsafe pit, v. 34 says you make restoration, and he eats it all.

- Ch 22 adds sheep to the restoration process.

But this isn't just about principles for livestock, it's about people and loving neighbor

The OT compares oxen to God's people. Isa 1:3 *'the ox knows its owner...but Israel does not know...'*

Jesus said the law is all about love. He used ox and donkey to argue from lesser to greater the value of lovingly restoring people: Lk 13:15 *'Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it?'*¹⁶ *And ought not this woman...be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?'*^{14:5}

'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out...' (NKJV)

Mt 12:11 *'Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out?'*¹² ***Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!*** *So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.'*¹³ *Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy...'*

His dead flesh was restored to life – how much more valuable is man to our Lord?!

We've all fallen in sin **but God**. Ps 30:3: *...you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.*

23:3: *He restores my soul.* The Lord is my shepherd who leads and loves us all who like sheep had gone astray.

He says in the prophets *'I will restore to you double...'* and *'I will restore...the years the locust has eaten...'*⁸

One application is 1 Pet 5:7 NIV: *Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you...'*¹⁰ *And the God of all grace...after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

The Lord cares for and restores His people and calls us to as well

1 Cor 9:9 *For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake...*

[caring for missionary needs] 2 Cor 13:7 *'...we pray to God that you may not do wrong...'*⁹ *...Your restoration is what we pray for...'*¹¹ ***Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace...'***

If someone falls in a pit of sin and is trapped in a trespass, Gal 6:1 says ***'restore him in a spirit of gentleness.***

*Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.'*² ***Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.***

Christ said in Mt 5:23 go, be reconciled to the believer who has something against you, restore

Restoration is #1, but there's another key word and concept for valuing life, #2. Repayment

Ex 21, middle of v. 36: *'he shall repay ox for ox, and the dead beast shall be his. 22:1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. 2 If a thief is found breaking in and is struck so that he dies, there shall be no bloodguilt for him, 3 but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be bloodguilt for him. He shall surely pay. If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.'*

Crime doesn't pay but it should pay back.

- The ox repayment plan is 1 for 1 if it took out another ox, but 5x if you stole and sold it.
- Same if you steal, sell or kill an ox, but for a sheep it's 4x (ox was most valuable animal).
- I have 4 cats I wouldn't miss if I lost them, but a lost ox was a big loss of investment.
- If you were found with a stolen animal in v. 4 the payback was a 2-for-1 deal.
- DeYoung says 4 sheep for 1 taken or 2 sheep for 1 feels like playing Settlers of Catan.

Lev 6:4: *'if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery...or the lost thing that he found...he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.'*

- God's law had lesser penalty if he repented and restored asap without being caught.
- Today that would be like stealing \$100, but you feel convicted
 - o So you confess to the victim and pay him back \$120.

But if he found you with his stolen bike worth \$100, you paid back x2 (or x4 if destroyed).

- If you had to pay twice for having stolen goods, you'd think twice before you do that.
- If a more valuable jewel you stole and sold, you'd owe 5 jewels.
- Even 1 ox was highly valued, crime doesn't pay if you have to repay fivefold.
 - o Would affect robbery rates!

Don't steal treasure, store up treasure in heaven where thieves can't break in and steal

DeYoung: 'If the only penalty for stealing a car was giving the car back...what's to lose? If you aren't caught, you have the car...If you are caught, you simply give it back...Paying back plus some was compensation for the loss of time, labor, and convenience, and served as a deterrent against future crimes...According to other ancient Near Eastern laws, thieves were to be put to death. Here, thieves simply had to pay...According to Hammurabi's code...there were to be penalties only for stealing from someone of the same social standing or higher. If you stole from a prince, a king, or a magistrate, you'd have to pay something, but if you stole from someone lesser than you, you didn't have worry about it.'⁹ God's law says no, all must repay.

What if one couldn't repay? Middle of Ex 22:3: *If he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.*

- In the ancient world a thief who couldn't repay was executed.
- Today they may be incarcerated. But God's law gave another way I think a better way
- Convicted grand theft had was repaid by the convict himself working to pay off his debt.

When Ex 21:2 talks about buying a slave this is one reason people were sold, debt slavery.

- Rather than government assume a debt by increasing govt. debt, the criminal works it off.
- Instead of taxpayers paying for years of jail, he paid in indentured service up to 6 years.

Thieves had to contribute back to society till the debt was paid off (owner bought contract).

- Not menaces or murderers (law executed), but others could pay instead of prison.
- Instead of a bail out or jail till you're out, you repay a debt you owe

Today we lock away bad men to keep us safe but for others the Exodus was to repay

Does a penitentiary make penitent? Biblical repentance does involve restoration and repayment.

- Ex 22 isn't just about stealing sheep, it's about people.

David heard of a man who stole a lamb and killed it, he said he must die and repay fourfold.¹⁰

- Nathan said *you are the man!* David stole Uriah's wife and Uriah's life (sheep in story).

David deserved to die but he repented. His family would pay in manifold ways but he prayed

- Ps 51 *'restore unto me the joy of my salvation.'*

The classic NT example is a wee little man, Zaccheus, let's sing 'a wee little man was he.'

Lk 19:8 *'if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.'*⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house..."

That's repentance unto life, above and beyond for any wrong, I repay whatever it takes.

Jesus quoted 'tooth for tooth,' but not for revenge, He said love, go the extra mile, give him your cloak also.¹¹

Don't repay evil for evil or make others pay who offend you, pray 'as we forgive our debtors'

How can you? 3rd final point: Ransom in the gospel makes repayment and restoration possible

21:30 *If a ransom is imposed on him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed...*

Who would impose a ransom payment to redeem a life?

- The judge from v. 22, end of the verse.

There were some capital offenses where a ransom price could be set to redeem one from death.

1 clear exception: Num 35:31 ‘*you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death...³³ ...no atonement can be made...except by the blood of the one who shed it.*’ If you murdered innocent blood, no ransom allowed, but implication is a ransom was allowed for other crimes.

Instead of the death penalty for the guilty, there could be a ransom paid to redeem (buy back)

This pointed to a greater ransom and redemption no mere man can ultimately pay. Ps 49:7 *Truly no man can ransom another, or give to God the price of his life,⁸ for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice,⁹ that he should live on forever and never see the pit...¹⁵ **But God will ransom my soul ...***

OT ransoms were a picture of Christ as no man can pay sufficient for eternal life, but God ...

Heb 9:15: *Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance...he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant (NIV).*

- In Ex 21:32 the price is 30 shekels of silver.
- That’s what was paid to Judas for the life of Jesus.
- That blood money was used to buy the potter’s field but Christ’s lifeblood paid a ransom.

Mk 10:45: *the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.*

We sing: ‘Praise my soul, the King of heaven...ransomed, healed, restored forgiven’

God the Judge imposed a ransom, and Jesus gave what was imposed for the redemption of life.

- 1 Tim 2 tells us to pray for all men, starting with govt. leaders like Frank Erb serves,
 - and it says He desires all men to be saved in Christ who gave Himself a ransom for all.
 - All classes of men, all kinds of people are part of ‘the many’ Jesus served and ransomed.
- Life is precious.

The innocent lifeblood of Jesus was priceless and was sufficient for the atonement price

1 Pet 1:18 says silver or gold couldn’t pay, but ‘*you were ransomed...with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb...*’ Rev 5:9 to the Lamb ‘*Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation...*’

That’s what moves us to support missions to unreached peoples and to reach out around here. If Jesus isn’t your Lord, let it move you to turn from sin and trust He died and rose for it. The wages of sin is death, but His blood ransoms from death all who believe. This moves us to sing

Ye ransomed from the fall, hail Him who saves you by His grace and crown Him Lord of all

Our closing song: ‘The rescue for sinners, ransom from heaven, Jesus Messiah, Lord of all’

And in the end times, ‘when He comes our glorious King, all His ransomed home to bring

Then anew this song we’ll sing, Hallelujah! What a Savior!

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary*, 387.

² Westminster Confession of Faith, “On the Law of God,” chapter 19.4: ‘To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired with the state of that people, not obliging any other, now, further than the general equity thereof may require.’

³ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-05-31/los-angeles-animal-shelter-volunteer-dog-mauling-jury-verdict>

⁴ <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/diane-whipple-dog-mauling-death-sf-17802167.php>

⁵ As cited by Dennis Prager, *Exodus*, p. 304.

⁶ Proverbs 14:4 (ESV) ‘...abundant crops come by the strength of the ox’ (NIV ‘abundant harvest’).

⁷ Prager, 308.

⁸ Zechariah 9:12, Joel 2:25

⁹ [Sermon: Love Your Neighbor | Kevin DeYoung | URC \(universityreformedchurch.org\)](#)

¹⁰ 2 Samuel 12.

¹¹ Matthew 5:38-41.