

Message #24

Deuteronomy 19:1-21

A nation or state or city or church or individual that wants to please God and receive the blessings of God, must protect the innocent and punish the wrongdoer. Truth and justice must go hand-in-hand.

The problem is, we are living in a time when, in many cases, truth is hard to find. We could cite many examples, but here is one of which we are all familiar. If you ask the question are more people dying now of Corona virus who have had a vaccine or who have not had the vaccine, you will be hard pressed to find an honest answer.

The media doesn't help because you cannot trust the media. They make up things that aren't even true. One such recent example of this is that one network has tried to blame the spread of the Corona Virus Variant on Governor Ron DeSantis, of Florida. Even though the outbreak is far more prevalent in New York City, facts don't matter. Things are overlooked and false things are not only tolerated, but promoted.

Quite frankly, I don't know if we have ever lived in a time when getting the truth and getting honest facts seems almost impossible. Here is what I know from God's word—God will not ever bless a nation, a state, a city, a church or an individual who is not focused on what is true and just. I also know diseases are sent by God—Deut. 28:22, 27. God demands honesty and integrity in every sphere of life and His blessings are contingent on that.

God carefully monitors this and He especially wants truth and justice to dominate His people if they want His blessings. That is exactly what Moses wanted the nation Israel to understand as they were about to go into the Promised Land.

GOD EXPECTS HIS PEOPLE TO REFLECT HIM BY THEIR PROTECTION OF JUSTICE AND TRUTH AND HE WILL GIVE HIS BLESSINGS TO THOSE WHO DO THIS.

Verse 1 gives to God's people the time when they were expected to do these things, when God had cut off the godless nations and given them their cities and houses. People don't like this about God, but the fact is, God does cut off people. God does destroy people. God does eliminate those who do not fear Him and who despise Him. God is a very patient and longsuffering God, but He has a breaking point and when people stop wanting Him and truth, He will do something about it.

When Israel would get into the land and have peace, God expected them to govern themselves by having a society that was dedicated to what was right, just and true. God does not bless liars. God does not bless frauds. God does not bless those who live a lie or who manipulate facts. God wants justice and truth dominating His people.

The truth is, God's people cannot implement these things until they are in charge and when they are in charge, He expects them to implement these things.

Certainly God would expect us to implement these things in our own house, but we are in no position to implement this city wide, state wide or nationwide. We are able to vote, but that is about it and if God permits a Christian to get into a key position of government, He expects him to govern in ways that are just and true. His blessings are contingent upon this.

Now there are five important governing rules of society that God wanted implemented:

GOVERNING RULE #1 – God wanted regional cities of refuge to protect those who were innocent from unjust retribution. **19:2-10**

To make certain that justice was carried out, God wanted three regional cities established in the middle of the Promised Land that would be known as cities of refuge (**19:2**).

God set eight specific guidelines for these cities:

Guideline #1 - There were to be three cities in the Promised Land. **19:2a**

We may recall that Moses already set up three refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan (Deut. 4:41-43), now there were to be three cities within the Promised Land on the west side of the Jordan.

Guideline #2 - The cities were to be in the middle of the Promised Land. **19:2b**

God did not want these cities in remote areas that were almost impossible to access. He wanted these cities within a distance that one could literally flee.

Guideline #3 - God's people were to prepare roads to those cities. **19:3a**

God wanted roads put in that led to these cities. These were roads of hope for one who was overwhelmed with feelings of great distress. These roads would direct one straight to the city of refuge.

Guideline #4 - God's people were to divide the territory into three parts. **19:3b**

So truth and justice and grace were to prevail all over the nation.

Guideline #5 - These cities were to be places for anyone who kills someone may flee. **19:3c**

This was a place of hope and security for one to flee.

Guideline #6 - These cities were to be a refuge for someone who committed unintentional manslaughter. **19:4-5**

What is described here is involuntary manslaughter. Voluntary manslaughter is when someone kills someone in the heat of passion or a quarrel that was not planned. Involuntary manslaughter refers to the fact that someone died by negligence or accident. Things do happen in this world and the Bible has guidelines for just about every situation imaginable.

If for example, a man had a friend who he did not hate previously and they were out cutting wood and he swung his axe to cut down a tree, the iron head of the axe hit his friend and killed him, he could go to one of these cities for protection. He did not intentionally kill his neighbor.

We may think this is an absurd illustration, but it is not so absurd. Israel was about to go into a Promised Land and they would clear land and build things and chop down trees. Neighbors would work together and this kind of thing could happen.

Now today, there must be a thorough investigation concerning any death because there is so much fraud. Many try to make something look like an accident that really wasn't an accident. One woman, who had been a nurse, poisoned her husband in such a way that it looked like he died of a heart attack. But through investigation and toxicology, it was proved it was cold-blooded murder.

God is a God of grace, not rigid legalism. He made a provision for people. Facts matter. Circumstances matter. Not each case was the same. There are accidents. So a man could flee to this city and if he made it, he was safe.

By the way, we think these cities do teach the doctrine of eternal security. Once one had fled to the city, he was safe. He knew he was safe not by feelings or experiences, but by the word of God. Once he was in this refuge place, he was forever secure. Once you are in Christ, you are forever secure. Not by your feelings or experiences, but by the word of God. Whoever believes will not perish.

The Pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, from 1897-1944 was George Truett. In his church was the Dallas Chief of Police, J. C. Arnold. He invited George Truett to join him and his dogs on a quail hunt. On their way out of the woods, Truett shifted his shotgun and it discharged and a full load of birdshot went into the calf of Chief Arnold's leg. The doctors and nurses assured Truett that the chief would be fine and in a few days the Police Chief was dead. He died of heart failure due to being shot. It was an accident but Truett felt he should leave the ministry he was so grief stricken. God kept him in ministry and he was able to reach out to people in trouble in an amazing way. Thank God for grace.

Guideline #7 - If these cities are not in existence, a near relative avenger might track him down and kill him even though he did not deserve it. **19:6**

There were no police departments so a near relative had a legal right and legal responsibility to take action against the one responsible as an “avenger of blood.” In all reality, if it were an accident one would think no asylum would be needed. But rage and anger can cause people to say and do things in some emotional reaction. So these refuge cities were crucial.

God again reinforces the point that three cities were to be set aside (**v. 7**).

Guideline #8 - If God sees you are obedient and He will enlarge His blessings and will give you all the Promised Land, then you are to add three more cities. **19:8-10**

Here is the formula for the blessings of God:

- 1) Carefully obey the word of God. **19:9a**
- 2) Love the LORD your God. **19:9b**
- 3) Walk in the ways of God always. **19:9c**

Notice **verse 10**, there is corporate culpability and guilt God gives to those who do not protect the innocent and seek justice and truth.

God would bless His people at the ultimate level if they obeyed Him. God never wanted innocent blood to be killed.

There is a refuge to whom you may flee that will bring you close to God. That refuge is Jesus Christ. Flee to Him and you will experience the great blessings of God.

GOVERNING RULE #2 – God demanded that one who commits intentional homicide to be put to death. **19:11-13**

These cities were originally set up for those who were innocent, not those who were murderers. God also set up specific guidelines for someone who did commit intentional homicide. They were not to slip into one of these cities and get away with it.

One who does evil must understand, God will not overlook it. God’s truth and justice demands He tracks the evildoer down. There are those who do commit intentional homicide and in a God honoring society, they do not let them get away with it. **What most communities and societies fail to realize is that when those who do evil are not punished, it is a serious wrong that will affect everyone.**

Guideline #1 - A man hated the person who died. **19:11a**

Guideline #2 - A man premeditated and waited to kill the one who died. **19:11b**

Guideline #3 - A man rises up and kills the man who dies. **19:11c**

Guideline #4 - A man flees to a refuge city. **19:11d**

Guideline #5 - The elders are to turn that man over to the blood avenger. **19:12a**

Guideline #6 - The blood avenger is to carry out the execution. **19:12b**

The death penalty is of God. A society interested in pleasing God is one that pronounces a serious judgment on those who do certain things.

Guideline #7 - The person being executed is not to be pitied. **19:13a**

Justice and truth are not to be overtaken by sloppy emotional sentimentality.

Guideline #8 - The person who murdered another is to be purged. **19:13b**

This person killed an innocent person and they are to be executed and God says if you will do this, things will go well for you.

God will not bless a society or a country or a state that allows those who kill innocent people to just go on living. There needs to be the implementation of capital punishment. There needs to be the death penalty given to those who kill intentionally.

GOVERNING RULE #3 – God demands that neighbor’s boundaries are to be honored. **19:14**

God is very interested in individuals. He knows where they live. He gives them their properties and He does not want that taken lightly.

A boundary stone was a boundary marker and it showed the land dimensions of a family’s inheritance. This was a critical matter in the Promised Land.

God says you never want to tamper with those boundaries. You are to respect the rights of other people. Do not try to move a boundary to get yourself more land.

One of the most evil things we have seen multiple times are families in which one sibling steals land from other siblings. There is no equal division. He manipulates and lies and steals to get as much as he can. Such a person will answer to God. I know of a case where a mother and father wrote out a will that said if certain land was sold, it was to be divided equally among the children and one sibling sold it and kept it all.

GOVERNING RULE #4 – Any report of sin or iniquity must be verified by two or three witnesses. **19:15**

People who do evil are to be held accountable for the evil in a society that will be blessed by God. But a single witness is not enough evidence to convict someone of something. In some criminal matter there needs to be two or three witnesses to confirm the facts. God does not look favorably on a society that prosecutes or convicts innocent people on the basis of flimsy evidence.

GOVERNING RULE #5 – Any false witness who is proven to be a false witness shall suffer the consequences of what he wanted to do to the one he accused falsely. **19:16-19**

Committing perjury in a court of law is a serious crime, but it is not nearly as serious as it is in the sight of God. If you commit perjury in a court of law, you will be subject to some fine or jail time. But if you commit perjury in a society following the word of God, you got the penalty the defendant would have received.

Guideline #1 - A malicious witness accuses someone of doing something wrong. **19:16**

Guideline #2 - Both men are to stand before the LORD and before legal officials. **19:17**

This could be the priests or a judge. Most people who go into court, do not realize that they are standing before God.

Guideline #3 - Judges are to conduct a thorough investigation of the facts. **19:18**

Guideline #4 - If the witness was a false witness, then he is to be punished with the punishment he wanted implemented. **19:19a**

If God's society follows through with this:

(Result #1) - Evil is purged. **19:19b**

(Result #2) - People who hear about this will hear and be afraid to do it. **19:20**

Punishment is a deterrent to crime, no matter what the psychological babble says.

Guideline #5 - When carrying out judgment, the person is not to be pitied. **19:21a**

Guideline #6 - Judgment is to be proportionate to the crime. **19:21b**

God expects His people to live together implementing justice based on truth.