

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EXODUS 21-23

The largest law library in the world is the Library Of Congress in Washington DC, with 2.9 million volumes. The books on the wall are full of case studies, legal precedents, rules of evidence, tort judgments, analysis of verdicts and remedies. *It's a legal wonderland!*

Well, today we come to ancient Israel's law library. In Exodus 20 God gave Moses Ten Commandments, but there were actually 613 laws, spread across the Torah or first five OT books. This morning's three chapters were part of the legal code that ordered Israel's society.

God chose the Hebrews to be His special people. They were to embody *His wisdom, mercy, fairness, and justice* - all of which are seen in the Law of Moses.

As Christians we like to point out that we're no longer under the Law - which is true. Rather than laws written on stone tablets, under the New Covenant God writes His Law on our hearts. The **moral laws** of Moses have been replaced with *a love for God*. The **civil laws** with *a love for one another*. The **ceremonial laws** with *the knowledge of Christ*. Truly, Jesus has fulfilled the Law.

But that doesn't make the Law irrelevant. For in it we can still see the character of God's love and wisdom.

Many of these laws will seem archaic to us. Israel was a theocratic kingdom, with an agrarian economy, at a time of antiquity. America is a secular democracy, with an industrialized economy, in a high-tech era. Our environments couldn't be more diverse. Yet the principles behind the law still provide us great wisdom.

Realize, the Law of Moses *isn't* and *shouldn't be* the law of our land. But it definitely shaped our laws, and the wisdom that birthed it is desperately needed today.

Chapter 21, "Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing." Interestingly, for 400 years, the Hebrews had been slaves in Egypt; now as soon as God sets them free, His first concern is for them to treat their slaves with the kindness He'd shown them...

When we Americans hear the term "slavery" we think of the *chattel slavery* that torments our past. Where humans were treated as *chattel* or "personal property." But that's not the slavery that existed in ancient Israel.

In Hebrew culture slavery was a way to escape extreme poverty - *an ancient version of bankruptcy*. If you owed a lot of money you could sell yourself or a family member to a creditor to work off the debt... Or if you stole from someone and couldn't make restitution, your labor would reimburse his losses... *You wouldn't go homeless and the victim would get his money back.*

Verse 2 tells us six years was the maximum length of a slave's servitude; then he was *set free, debt free*.

It's interesting, the fact that a bankruptcy today stays on your record for usually seven years, probably relates to this biblical law. A lot of English common law was influenced by the Law of Moses and the Bible.

Verse 3, "If (the slave) comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him." But, "If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself." It didn't mean he'd never be reunited with his family. It just meant he would have to reimburse his master for the family and their upkeep.

"But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free...' On occasion, a Hebrew master was so kind and generous that at the end of the six year servitude the slave would want to stay with him permanently. He felt he could have a better life serving his master, than on his own.

"Then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." A pierced ear signified *the doulos or a love-slave* - the voluntary slave of a merciful master.

This is what Paul refers to in the NT when he calls himself "a bondservant of Jesus." He'd discovered that serving Jesus is a far better life than living for yourself!

Verse 7, "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do." A female was never treated as a mere slave. She entered her master's house as a perspective wife. She was betrothed to either her master or her master's son.

And this might be a difficult conversation for a dad. "Sweetie sorry, but I'm behind on my payments, so..."

And worse, "If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her."

If for some reason the master doesn't want to go through with the marriage, he can't just sale her to strangers. Her family has the right to buy her back.

“And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters. If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.” Now if a woman falls out of favor with her husband he can't just ditch her. No fault divorce would've been a cruel punishment in the day, since there were few employment options for unmarried women... The man can take a second wife, but he's required to continue to feed and clothe his first wife as well. He stays responsible for both women.

Which in practice sounds a lot like today's alimony laws. They actually come from these passages...

And if the man neglects his responsibility to his first wife, **“she shall go out free, without paying money.”**

Here's the big lesson to glean from these marriage laws. Pagan cultures viewed women as nothing but a piece of property. A man treated his wife however he pleased. She was totally at the man's mercy. But God's Law mandated a concern for the healthy treatment of women. *God was the first champion of women's rights!*

In verses 12-13 God differentiates between first degree murder and manslaughter - *a legal distinction we hold even to this day...* **“He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.”** First degree murder or *“with intent,”* deserves capital punishment...

“However, if he did not lie in wait...” The murder was unplanned and non-premeditated. **“But God delivered him into his hand...”** Say it was an accident or even a crime of passion... **“Then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee.”** For manslaughter God assigns a lesser penalty. Later in the Law, in Deuteronomy 19 God appoints cities of refuge where a person guilty of manslaughter can run to God's altar and find safety...

Yet there's no safety for a murderer who plots his crime in advance. **“But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.”**

Verse 15, **“And he who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.”** Hit a parent and it was the last time you hit a parent. *No repeat offenders when it came to punching parents.* God was serious about the commandment to honor your mom and dad.

"He who kidnaps a man and sells him, or if he is found in his hand, shall surely be put to death." Kidnaping or extortion were also capital crimes on par with first degree murder. Stealing a child is taking a life.

And if you hit your parents *with words*... "And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." Now if you're the typical teenager be thankful you're not under the Law of Moses, you might have never made driving age... *Yet learn from the Law and respect your parents!* They brought you into the world and probably still love you even after all you've done. **Respecting parents is a serious issue in God's eyes.**

"If men contend with each other (that is, start a fight), and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die but is confined to his bed, if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff, then he who struck him shall be acquitted. He shall only pay for the loss of his time, and shall provide for him to be thoroughly healed." He who inflicted the injury needs to cover the victim's missed pay and medical expenses.

"And if a man beats his male or female servant with a rod, so that he dies under his hand, he shall surely be punished. Notwithstanding, if he remains alive a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his property."

Slavery in ancient Israel was not what it was in the pre-Civil War South, but rarely is any slavery pleasant. A Hebrew master could severely punish his slaves, *but there were limits*. He couldn't kill him with impunity. An owner had rights over his slave, but within boundaries.

Verse 22, "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine." The expression, "no harm, no foul" is not biblical. Just because the baby was born with no complications it doesn't mean the violent act didn't cause the mother to undergo emotional distress. This family should be allowed to collect damages.

"But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

Verses 23-25 provide the overarching rule when it comes to God's punishment of violent acts - **the punishment should be proportionate to the crime**. If you take out my eye, then you should lose an eye - *or the intent here may've been served by the violator paying an amount of money equal to the value of your vision*.

Often we read "eye for an eye" as harsh, but realize this was a call for mercy, and restraint, and fairness. For if you punch me in the eye my natural tendency is not "eye

for eye.” I won’t just want to punch you in the eye, I’ll punch you in the eye **and** kick you in the shins.

Human desire is not tit for tat. It’s *to one up* the person who’s harmed us. “**Eye for eye**” was God’s way of tempering our desire for excessive retaliation.

Verse 26, “**If a man strikes the eye of his male or female servant, and destroys it, he shall let him go free for the sake of his eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of his male or female servant, he shall let him go free for the sake of his tooth.**” If a master goes too far and physically assaults his slave, he proves he can’t handle the responsibility that goes with managing servants. Thus, the slave goes free. He receives something far more valuable than an eye or a tooth - his freedom.

“If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted. But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner (the ox had a violent history that its owner knew about), and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.” A negligent owner bears responsibility for his violent ox... *or his vicious pit bull... or the car that needs new brakes and has worn out tires...*

“If there is imposed on him a sum of money, then he shall pay to redeem his life, whatever is imposed on him.” The owner’s death sentence can be commuted if he pays damages for the harm caused by his ox. **“Whether it has gored a son or gored a daughter, according to this judgment it shall be done to him. If the ox gores a male or female servant, he shall give to their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.”** Animals prone to violence should be put down

And notice here the price of a slave was thirty shekels of silver. This is what made Judas’ betrayal of Jesus so hideous. Matthew 26:15 tells us Judas sold the Lord of glory for thirty pieces of silver - *again the price of a slave*. Judas had little regard for Jesus’ life.

“And if a man opens a pit, or if a man digs a pit and does not cover it, and an ox or a donkey falls in it, the owner of the pit shall make it good; he shall give money to their owner, but the dead animal shall be his.” *At least he’ll have plenty of meat for the winter.*

“And if one man’s ox hurts another’s, so that it dies, then they shall sell the live ox and divide the money from it; and the dead ox they shall also divide. Or if it was known that the ox tended to thrust in time past, and its owner has not kept it confined, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall be his own.”

You read about a man's ox goring another man, and you wonder what in the world does this have to do with me? But these negligence laws actually helped form English Common Law. They're extremely relevant.

These laws teach us that we're responsible for our property - whether that property is an ox, or pit bull, or open pit, or a sport's car. People are accountable not only for their personal actions, but for injuries caused by the possessions and people under their authority.

Chapter 22, "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep." The thief doesn't just restore the value of what he stole, he pays the victim restitution plus damages for the trouble he caused.

"If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed." If a stranger breaks into my house with evil intent it's my right to protect myself, my family, my possessions.

Under God's law I can pull out my shotgun and blow the guy away. *I'll witness to him until the paramedics get there*, but we all have the right to self-defense.

Yet, in verse 3, if someone breaks into my house one night, and I don't discover it until the next day I can't track him down and shoot him after the fact. "If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft." Once the immediate danger passes, I can't just kill the thief for his thievery.

The emphasis is on him making **restitution!** If the thief couldn't pay for the damage he caused he was sold as a slave and made to work off what he stole.

"If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double." And again, nothing is said about prison. The emphasis in God's Law was on **restitution** and **compensatory damages**. The thief with the stolen goods had to pay punitive damages double what he stole. Today, our courts toss a thief in jail, and he loses his ability to work. The victim never gets reimbursed.

Verse 5, "If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man's field (and eats up his green grass), he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard." Recently an Amazon delivery truck tore up my beautiful sodded grass. I asked for restitution. God \$485. They needed to pay!

"If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. If a man

delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man's house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double.” The amount of damages is specified. It's not left up to the whim of judge or jury.

But “If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor's goods.” In other words, if someone agrees to oversee my stuff, and it turns up missing - *that caretaker has a responsibility*. He should be scrutinized to see if he played a role in my loss, either by stealing or mismanaging my goods.

This is the first mention of what we might call a *white-collar crime*. Here's a financial manager who's gone bad, and has embezzled someone else's funds.

Verse 9 deals with tort law. “For any kind of trespass, whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.” A tort is a civil, non-criminal dispute between parties where justice requires a remedy. It falls to a judge to hear both sides of the case, decide on liability; and determine compensation. The same thing goes on in America's civil courts today.

“If a man delivers to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, a sheep, or any animal to keep, and it dies, is hurt, or driven away, no one seeing it, then an oath of the LORD shall be between them both, that he has not put his hand into his neighbor's goods; and the owner of it shall accept that, and he shall not make it good.”

God's law is fair. It acknowledges that accidents do happen. *In a litigious world like ours this is a needed reminder*. A person acting in good faith shouldn't be held responsible for something beyond their control. Say you're watching your neighbor's pet parakeet, and your cat eats it. Your neighbor knew you had a cat, and he was taking a risk by entrusting it to you. **You're not liable.** “But if, in fact, it is stolen from him, he shall make restitution to the owner of it... If it is torn to pieces by a beast, then he shall bring it as evidence, and he shall not make good what was torn.” Whatever is left of the bird is proof the tragedy wasn't your fault.

“And if a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not being with it, he shall surely make it good.” If you borrow your neighbor's lawn mower, and while in your possession it breaks down, then you're responsible for the damage. *If the mower was in disrepair you shouldn't have borrowed it...* But if you hired or leased the equipment and it breaks down; then your rental fee should cover repairs. “If its owner was with it, he shall not make it good; if it was hired, it came for its hire.”

Verse 16 is an important law, "If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride-price for her to be his wife."

Notice, just because the couple has sex doesn't make them married. Almost all unmarried couples I talk to who live together before marriage say, "Well, in God's eyes we're married." Or "We don't need a formality to prove our love." Both assertions are wrong.

Verse 16 states clearly you aren't married in the eyes of God until the proper legalities are fulfilled. In ancient Israel that was the payment of a dowry or bridal price. And in modern America, it's standing before a pastor, or a justice-of-the-peace, and exchanging vows.

Verse 17, "If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money according to the bride-price of virgins." In antiquity, to marry a woman the man had to compensate her family for their loss. Every bride was a mail order bride. She came at a price. And since a virgin was more desirable, she came at a higher price.

In verse 17, because the man stole the woman's virginity her dad had the right to expect a virgin's price.

And here's the big lesson taught in these verses, according to God's law there's no such thing as "casual sex." If a man had sex with a woman, he was expected to marry her, and become responsible for her care.

Today, singles have sex and all it costs is the price of a dinner... But when a girl gives herself to a guy, and expects little in return, it cheapens her value, and degrades her self-worth. This is why single men and women should *never give away their sexuality without a lifetime commitment in return!* Wait for marriage...

The next few verses establish capital crimes. "You shall not permit a sorceress to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. He who sacrifices to any god, except to the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed." In God's eyes witchcraft, bestiality, and idolatry warranted the death penalty. And these were all common practices in the perverted land of Canaan where God would eventually settle Israel.

In the OT it seems people could sink to such depths of depravity they became a menace to themselves and society. They were incorrigible and sentenced to death.

But this was before the gospel of grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. Today, we would never enact this law because the power of Jesus makes change possible! We had a young lady in our church who was witch. She was into black magic, until Jesus saved her life. She came to Calvary Chapel and served faithfully for years. Jesus has the power to transform lives. In Christ, even the witch and the pervert can be saved!

Verse 21, "You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." A good measure of our character is how we treat strangers. Don't *stick with the clique*. Be friendly.

"You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." These are strong words, from God Himself. God will defend the defenseless. In His anger He will personally protect the neediest among Israel - the widows and the orphans.

"If you lend money to any of My people who are poor among you, you shall not be like a moneylender to him; you shall not charge him interest." Don't make a buck off a brother on hard times. *Show interest not charge it!*

"If you ever take your neighbor's garment as a pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down. For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin. What will he sleep in?" Don't take a poor man's only coat as collateral for a debt. Give it back before nightfall to keep him warm. "And it will be that when he cries to Me, I will hear, **for I am gracious.**"

Verse 28, "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people." What you say about God and the authorities God sets over you is extremely important.

And speaking of honoring God a great way to do so is by giving to God your tithes and offerings in a regular and timely manner. He tells us, "You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices."

And "The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me." God saved Israel's firstborn in Egypt, so He required them to give their firstborn back to Him. They'd redeem or *buy back* their firstborn with an offering. And it was not just a firstborn child, but "Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me."

Verse 31, "And you shall be holy men to Me: you shall not eat meat torn by beasts in the field; you shall throw it to the dogs." I hope you've never been tempted to stop, pick up a dead carcass alongside the road, take it home, and eat roadkill. *But if you have, don't!*

Human beings prepare their food and cook meat. They don't tear into it like an animal and eat it raw. Don't be like a buzzard picking at a carcass. *This is why I like my steak well done!* God is over us. Animals are below us. Be holy. Be more like God, than animals.

God wants us to be civilized not savage. If someone calls you *a party animal* don't take it as a compliment.

Chapter 23, "You shall not circulate a false report." Don't slander or gossip. "Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness." Don't take a bribe, or perjure your testimony. Be a truthful witness.

"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil;" Don't succumb to peer pressure! Develop the strength of character to go against the flow. Resist the herd, the mob mentality. *It's toilet paper that goes with the flow.*

"Nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after many to pervert justice." Don't be a rabble rouser.

"You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute." Just as it's wrong to favor a rich man due to his riches, don't favor the poor man just because he's poor. *No virtue signaling.* There's no value in standing up for the oppressed when the oppressed are guilty!

Verse 4, "If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again." As Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you..."

"If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it." If you see an enemy on the road in need of a ride, don't drive through the nearest mud puddle to splash him. *Give him a ride!*

"You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute. Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous. For I will not justify the wicked. And you shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the discerning and perverts the words of the righteous. Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt." This is all love in action.

"Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove." Not only were the Hebrews to rest one day in seven, they were also to let the land rest every seventh year. In Leviticus 25:21 God promised His people their land would yield three times the crop in the sixth year to make up for the lack of a harvest in year seven.

It's interesting, modern farming techniques recognize the wisdom of God's OT plan. Today's methods of crop rotation are based on this principle. Allowing farmland to rest replenishes itself of nutrients and minerals.

Verse 12, "Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest, that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may be refreshed." Rest one day in seven is not only **holy**, but **healthy**. *Just ask Chick Fil-A. They're workers are making money hand over fist.*

"And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth." The Law required a fierce loyalty to God. Don't even mention false idols.

Verse 14, "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year..." In Leviticus 23 God speaks of seven feasts, but there were three **major** feasts: "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which included Passover) (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib (in the springtime), for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty)..."

And the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field;" Fifty days after the Passover, Hebrews celebrated the Feast of Harvest, or as the Greeks called it, "Pentecost," which means "fifty." And it was on Pentecost that God's Spirit was poured out on Jesus' disciples. An outpouring that began the spiritual harvest of souls that continues to this very day.

"And the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year (this was the fall harvest), when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field." This feast will later be called **Tabernacles** - in honor of how Israel lived for forty years in the wilderness. *Ultimately, the Feast of Ingathering speaks of Jesus' second coming and the re-establishment of God's kingdom to Israel.*

"Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD." When the Temple is built they'll be required to pilgrimage to Jerusalem for these feasts. "You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God." God's portion was never the leftovers, but "the first of the firstfruits" - the pick of the litter - the best you had. God always deserves our **very first** and **very best**.

Verse 19, "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." And this is why a kosher Jew will never eat a cheeseburger! He doesn't mix meat and dairy. The whole kosher system was born from this verse.

But there are other interpretations... Some scholars believe this verse is actually outlawing a pagan, Canaanite ritual. It's really a prohibition against idolatry.

Another interpretation is that a mother's milk gives life, so never use what's intended to **give life** as a means to **take life**. A mama's milk should never serve as broth for a stew... A modern application would be using nuclear energy (a life-giving thing) to make bombs (an instrument of death) - or using intra-uterine technology to perform an abortion. Don't take a *life-giving agent* and turn it into an *instrument of death*.

"Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him." We glean from other passages the angel or messenger that traveled with Israel in the wilderness was none other than Jesus. *And God's name is in Him!* Yahweh is in *YAH-shua* or *Jesus*. "*Jesus*" means "*Yahweh is salvation.*"

But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off."

And there are enemies in your spiritual life that stand between you and the good place God has for you. God wants to cut off those enemies - not the Hivites and Jebusites - *but the Coors Lites, the skin-tights, the wild nights, and the snake bites*. And the key to victory is to obey His voice - do all that Jesus asks you to do.

In ancient Israel God built a physical kingdom in a geographical location, so OT blessings were physical: *military victories - fruitful crops - no sickness - no miscarriages, or barrenness - material prosperity*.

But today God builds a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. Thus, the blessings we can expect are spiritual... *freedom from sin - spiritual abundance - the absence of worry, and depression, and fearfulness*.

But there are enemies in our way that oppose us: *the Friday nights, the-live-by-sight, the fleshly fight*. God wants to drive out our enemies, and fill us with joy.

But you can't compromise with the enemy. "*You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.*"

"*So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days. I will send*

My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beast of the field become too numerous for you.” God promises Israel a decisive victory, but it’ll be slow, incremental. It’ll take a while - for good reason.

And I love verse 30. It explains how God works His victory in us, **“Little by little I will drive them out from before you, until you have increased, and you inherit the land.”** God takes on our personal Hittites one at a time. *He conquers the drinking problem - then the temper tantrums - before long the dirty language disappears.* Little by little we take possession of the life God has for us. This is why we can’t get impatient. God helps us conquer our habits one at a time. We begin to occupy our blessings and live in victory **“little by little.”**

Verse 31, **“And I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the sea, Philistia, and from the desert to the River. For I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand, and you shall drive them out before you.”** Israel will one day inhabit from Egypt to the Euphrates.

And God also wants to drive out our enemies *little by little* - but we can delay the process. He warns us in verse 32, **“You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”** Again, there can be no compromises with the enemy. Don’t say, **“Oh, I’ll leave a few Hittites in the hills - or a few Miller Lites in the fridge - what’s the big deal?”** Hey, God says it is a big deal! Co-existing with the enemy leads us to sin.

You’ve got to deal ruthlessly with the foreigners, the issues in your life that are foreign to God’s will. Try to live with the enemy, and you’ll end up a spiritual failure.