

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26 S. Heeding God's Call To Guard The Vulnerable (Deuteronomy 24:5-25:19)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people are vulnerable to significant harm or loss in life, a fact we can easily document as follows:

(1) Two letters to the editor in The Wall Street Journal, February 14, 2014, p. A14 responded to the February 6 story, "More Men in Their Prime Are Out of Work and at Home" to explain "a major reason unemployed men over 40 have trouble finding new jobs" is due to "their age," wrote Paul Immerman of New York. Joe Caudle from London, England added that "lingering unemployment is due in part to employers seeking what they perceive to be the perfect candidate . . . many positions could be filled by relaxing the constraints set by human resources personnel."

Though the reasons vary, many men are out of work, and even my neighbor across the street just lost his job after working for 25 years in an oversight role in a company due in part to business cost-cutting measures.

(2) In its Bookshelf column, The Wall Street Journal on February 18, 2014, p. A11 ran Barton Swaim's report on Fred Siegel's book, "The Revolt Against The Masses: How Liberalism Has Undermined The Middle Class" where Mr. Swaim noted "Siegel argues" political "(l)iberal intellectuals' dislike for the habits of the American majority . . . resulted in the near-death of high culture, the elevation of taxpayer-strangling public-sector unions, and a presidential administration willing to steamroll America's middle class to achieve its purposes."

(3) However, not only in the secular realm, but in religious circles, even we who attend Nepaug Bible Church are vulnerable to theological error and its ensuing spiritual harm: (a) I recently learned that area Roman Catholic apologists are teaching their laymen to "win" evangelicals to the Catholic faith by witnessing of their fulfilling experiences as Catholics! So many evangelicals have shifted from their Protestant Reformation's *Sola Scriptura* roots, the belief that "Scripture alone" is the final authority for truth, Catholic officials have noticed it, and even we at our Church who have personal contacts with many other area evangelical Christians face the threat of viewing personal experience and not Scripture as our final authority for truth [in violation of Deuteronomy 13:1-4]! (b) In the last few months, I have had several conversations with believers who live in other states who use our Church web site to discern Bible truth to offset errant beliefs they face from professing Christian groups in their locations.

Need: *So we ask, "If many are at risk of significant harm or loss in various realms, what does God want us to do?"*

- I. **When Deuteronomy 24:5-25:19 was written, Israel faced exposure to Canaanite feudalism where a self-serving, upper class harmfully dominated vulnerable lowly classes, Zon. Pic. Ency. Bib., v. One, p. 706.**
- II. **However, God was COMPASSIONATE toward the VULNERABLE (Exodus 22:21-24), so OPPOSITE Canaanite OPPRESSIVE PAGAN FEUDALISM, God called Israel in Deuteronomy 24:5-25:19 to REFLECT His COMPASSION by GUARDING the VULNERABLE in her midst from HARM:**
 - A. God wanted Israel to guard new marriages from the risk of rapid extermination by war, Deuteronomy 24:5: a newly married man was to be exempt from fighting in war for a year that he might edify his new bride.
 - B. God wanted Israel to guard those vulnerable to brutal business dealings, Deut. 24:6, 10-15, 19-22; 25:4, 13-16:
 1. Israel was to guard vulnerable laborers from the risk of losing their means of livelihood, Deut. 24:6: both upper and lower mill stones were used to grind grain "necessary for daily food," so they were not to be taken from a poor man as collateral in a business deal, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Deut. 24:6.
 2. Israel was to guard poor day laborers from the risk of not being promptly paid, Deut. 24:14-15: they were to be paid the day of their labor so they could use the much-needed money for that day's livelihood needs.
 3. Israel was to guard the poor from the risk of lacking access to food, Deut. 24:19-22: farmers were to make a single harvesting pass over their fields so the poor would have access to food in gleanings of the harvest.
 4. Israel was to guard vulnerable laborers from the risk of lacking access to proper remuneration, Deut. 25:4: the saying of not muzzling the ox that threshes out the grain appears not only to have been a law, but also a saying that applied to human situations, that Israel was not cruelly to withhold just remuneration from a man who deserved it for his work that benefited the lives of others, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 306.
 5. Israel was to guard those who were vulnerable to deceitful business transactions, Deut. 25:13-16: a merchant might use one set of heavier weights in a transaction that utilized a balance to buy materials from

- a wholesaler and another set of lighter weights to sell his merchandise to a customer, cheating both the wholesaler and the customer to boost his profits, so God charged Israel's merchants not cheat either party!
- C. God wanted Israel to guard people who were vulnerable to the unjust loss of personal liberty, Deut. 24:7: though one might sell himself into slavery to pay off a debt, the unjust, forced enslavement of a free man for the financial gain of another party was condemned as a capital offense!
 - D. God wanted Israel to guard the public that was vulnerable to destructive infectious diseases, Deut. 24:8-9: Moses reminded Israel to heed the law earlier stated on handling infectious skin diseases for the public good.
 - E. God wanted Israel to guard people who were vulnerable to unjust harm in legal realms, Deut. 24:16, 17-18:
 1. Israel was to guard the guiltless from being unjustly punished, Deuteronomy 24:16: the guilty party alone was to be punished for his sin, not a family member in proxy punishment.
 2. Israel was to guard socially vulnerable people in her midst, people such as aliens, the fatherless and widows, from legal injustices by socially influential men in courts of law, Deuteronomy 24:17-18.
 3. Israel was to guard even convicted criminals from excessive, degrading punishment, Deuteronomy 25:1-3.
 - F. God wanted Israel to guard men who were vulnerable to the culturally grave risk of barrenness, Deut. 25:5-12:
 1. Israel was to guard the deceased from the extermination of his lineage via levirate marriage, Deut. 25:5-10: the death of a man who had no heirs left his property alienated from his family, so marriage was required where the deceased's brother was to sire an heir for his brother by cohabiting with his brother's widow.
 2. Israel was to guard the living from failure to be able to produce heirs, Deut. 25:11-12: a woman's effort to injure a man's genitals in a conflict not risky to her own welfare risked his not being able to sire heirs, thus alienating his family property, so a woman guilty of this crime was to be severely punished, *Ibid.*, p. 307.
 - G. God wanted Israel to guard her individual citizens who were vulnerable to international abuse, Deut. 25:17-19:
 1. In Exodus 17:8-16, the Amalekites attacked her stragglers in Israel's wilderness travels, not fearing God, so He ruled that when Israel settled, she was to exterminate the Amalekites, Deut. 25:17-19.
 2. Thus, Israel was to protect her individual citizens who were vulnerable to abuse by international forces.

Lesson: OPPOSITE FEUDALISTIC Canaanite society that PROMOTED an ELITE class at the OPPRESSIVE HARM of the VULNERABLE, God called Israel to GUARD the VULNERABLE in REFLECTION of HIMSELF.

Application: May we (1) trust in Christ to escape hell and gain eternal life by God's grace, John 3:16. (2) Then, in reflection of our God of compassionate grace, may we (a) rely on the Holy Spirit's power (Gal. 5:16) (b) to CARE COMPASSIONATELY for those about us who are VULNERABLE to HARM, and so GUARD them, Rom. 15:1-3.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

(1) This sermon's lesson surprisingly led me to a decision as a pastor I had never before made. Until now, I had always said that God had *so far* indicated He wanted me to keep ministering here at Nepaug Bible Church. However, in recent months, I have often been confronted by a deepening theological and spiritual drought in the landscape both locally and in other parts of the world where people use our Church web site! Knowing this drought puts those in our body and others elsewhere who use our site at risk of theological and thus resulting spiritual harm, Deuteronomy 24:5-25:10 in principle **requires** me to make the following commitment: I hereby commit to expound Scripture as your pastor in offsetting the effects of this theological and spiritual drought unless forced to do otherwise by circumstances beyond my control! I thus plan to serve God at this Church for the rest of my ministry life!

(2) Then, in concert with this, last Sunday after the worship service in Fellowship Hall, a vulnerability I myself have surfaced in a conversation with our Church Treasurer, Barry. He asked, "Don, you always request from the pulpit for prayer requests from other people, but you have personal needs, too! How can I pray for you?"

I was surprised by his question, for, though I know people pray for my wife and me, it was the first time I had ever been asked that question. I thought a bit, and then realized a burden I had been bearing for months was what the Lord wanted to surface, so I told him, "Barry, I need wisdom on special decisions I have to make as a pastor -- I need the wisdom of God!" He agreed to pray for this request, and asked me to bring him other requests that might surface!

It may well be that my personal application of this sermon that was prepared after that conversation last Sunday was the result of Barry's intercession -- I don't know. Regardless, I am grateful he is helping to bear my load!

May we (1) trust in Christ to become part of the body of Christ, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13. Then, (2) may ALL of us in Christ (a) rely on the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16) to be able to (b) BEAR the BURDENS of the VULNERABLE around us, ESPECIALLY those who are vulnerable in the Body of Christ, and not to please ourselves, that we might obey the Lord's Word at Romans 15:1-3 and Deuteronomy 24:5-25:19!