

Series: Exodus
Title: I Am Gracious
Text: Exodus 22: 21-27
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Exodus 22: 21: Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22: Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. 23: If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; 24: And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless. 25: If thou lend money to *any of my people that is poor* by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. 26: If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: 27: For that *is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?* and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I *am* gracious.

In each of these people that God protects, we see a picture of you and I who are saved by God's grace: strangers, widows, orphans and the poor. God protected them in his law. God told the children of Israel to remember themselves when they saw them. But the law did not constrain the natural children of Israel to obey. They treated all four of these groups with cruelty. It was not politically advantageous to do otherwise—no one cared about these people.

Yet, God, by the Holy Spirit, makes his child remember ourselves when we see these four kinds of people—or people in any downtrodden condition. It is because these four helpless kinds of people picture us, God's elect, while we were dead in sins. We were the helpless stranger, the widow, the orphan and the poor.

But God saved us by his grace. Why?—**v27:...FOR I AM GRACIOUS.**

Proposition: The motive for God's elect in all our dealings with one another, and with all men, is because God has been gracious to us.

In all our dealing with one another, in all our dealings with others, when we see someone in this condition, we should remember this was our condition. Be gracious to them, as God was gracious to us

THE STRANGER

Exodus 22: 21: Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

A stranger was a Gentile—anyone from outside the nation Israel. God told the children of Israel, particularly his elect in Israel, do not vex a Gentile stranger, nor oppress him. The reason is because you were vexed and oppressed when in slavery to Pharaoh and his taskmasters. Who made the difference? God says, "*For I am gracious.*"

God's grace is not common. God delivered the children of Israel but God was showing grace to his elect among the children of Israel. The non-elect make benefit from God's works but God is only being gracious to his elect. God gave them all this law but his elect among Israel heard it spiritually. God told them be gracious to the Gentile stranger *for I was gracious to you*. They did it, not merely because it is law, but they were constrained by God's love toward them in being gracious to them.

You and I who God chose and redeemed are Gentiles. God tells us the same thing.

Ephesians 2: 11: Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, **and strangers** from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. 14: For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; 15: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; 16: And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: 17: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19: Now therefore ye are NO MORE STRANGERS AND FOREIGNERS, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

We were strangers, without Christ, without God, without hope. The natural children of Israel never obeyed the law. They treated Gentiles as dogs and cruel.

But God was gracious to his elect then and now and “*now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*” It was by God’s sovereign electing grace. It was by God’s effectual redeeming grace. It was by God’s irresistible regenerating grace.

Therefore, God says that in all our everyday dealings with sinners, remember they are strangers to God. They are in the same condition we were in. Self-righteous religious people that once kept some of you in bondage are in bondage themselves. They are strangers to God. So God commands us to be gracious to them constrained, not by law, but by the truth that God is gracious to us.

Hebrews 13: 1: Let brotherly love continue. 2: Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

God was gracious and took the heavy burden off us. We are to take the burden off the stranger physically and spiritually.

In our day, the liberal folks say so we should allow folks coming from the south into this country. But God had laws for a Gentile stranger to obey to enter Israel. We have laws to enter this country. All the strangers entered Israel according to God’s law—all foreigners at Ellis Island entered legally. Then, once the stranger enters legally, God’s people are more than willing to help strangers—foreigners—constrained by the grace and love of God.

After I had finished my message, I heard a civil rights activists making his arguments against Christianity because Christ told us to “turn the other cheek”. We could put all white people in chains and make them labor in fields and put all folks of any color in power and the same thing would happen that has happened throughout the Bible when one group held power over another—injustice. It is because the problem is the heart. If this world was as zealous to promote the gospel as they are to make protest signs and deal with the problem on the surface there would be true change because God changes the heart. But God only does it through the gospel of his grace!

THE WIDOW

Exodus 22: 22: Ye shall not afflict any widow,

A true widow in scripture was one without a husband, without children, without extended family to care for her. Christ knew who his elect bride was when we fell. But from our viewpoint, we were the widow. When

we fell in Adam, spiritually, we became without a husband, without son or daughter, without any family to provide for us. We were spiritual widows.

I will not labor this point since we looked at marriage several times in the past week. But God the Father chose us by free grace, not based on anything in us and he did so before the world was made. He betrothed us, the bride, to Christ our Husband. Our Husband came and paid all the debt we owed--redeemed us from all iniquity.

Read Hosea at your leisure. We were Gomer, the harlot. Christ is Hosea, Savior. He provided for us while we were dead in sins. Then he made us behold our sin. Then he made us see he redeemed us from off the slave block. Christ said to us, *"Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee"* (Hos 3: 3). His grace makes us never leave him again.

THE ORPHAN

Exodus 22: 22: Ye shall not afflict...fatherless child. 23: If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; 24: And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

When we fell in Adam we lost God as our father as far as we could see. We had no mother, no sister, no brother. We were the helpless, oppressed orphan God speaks of throughout scripture. There was none to plead the cause of us orphans like as there was none to do so in Israel. They oppressed the orphan and vexed him. But the helpless orphan had no one to deliver him and help him.

Yet, God, by his grace alone, called us and revealed that God is our Father and Christ our Everlasting Father. Now, we cry, *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 Jn 3: 1). Now we have a mother—the church of God—*"Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all."* Now we are in the family and household of God, with innumerable company of brothers and sisters—we are in the household of God—*"of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."*

We had the protection of God the whole time and we still do. God says to any who would harm us, *"If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless."* So God says to you and I saved by grace, *"Be gracious to the widow and the orphans as I was gracious to you."*

James 1:27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Isaiah 1:17: Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

We do this first with the gospel of Christ—spreading it throughout this world. If we can help any physically we relieve their temporal affliction. But most of all tell them about Christ our Husband—about God our Father.

THE POOR

Exodus 22: 25: If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. 26: If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to

pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: 27: For that is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

We “sold ourselves for nought.” We had no covering, no raiment—no righteousness.

First thing God must do is make us see we are guilty, bankrupt, owing a debt we cannot pay to God. Our creditor was God himself and his divine justice. We had no raiment to cover the shame of our nakedness before God.

Oh, but by God’s grace—the very one we owed this great debt to—he provided us with his own garment of righteousness. Christ did not charge us usury. He replaced our worn out, tattered, filthy garment with his new, spotless robe of righteousness made by his own perfect obedience unto death. Then he graciously forced us to call out to him for mercy. God says, “*it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.*” And it came to pass that when we cried unto God, he heard us.

He showed us Christ was made a curse for us and redeemed us from the curse of our creditor—the law. He brought us to mourn for Christ as one that mourns for his only begotten son—we cast all our care on him. Before the sun went down, God said, “*Bring forth the best robe—the robe of my Son’s perfect righteousness*”—and he clothed us. And why? Why did God show all this kindness to us? God says, v27, “*for I am gracious.*”

Brethren, God saves by grace alone, apart from our works. God’s elect are the very most helpless among society: *strangers, widows, orphans, too poor to pay one thing*. God made us fellowcitizens, no more strangers. Christ became our faithful Husband who shall never die. God is our faithful Father. Christ blessed us with the unsearchable riches. ALL BECAUSE GOD SAID, “I AM GRACIOUS!”

Believer’s ought to be the kindest, most loving, most helpful people on this earth. They are! Brethren, is there any downcast, needy sinner in this earth in whom we cannot behold the spiritual condition we ourselves were in before God? God says, “*Now, you be gracious, for I am gracious.*”

Psalms 145:8: The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

The grace of God makes us see ourselves in those downtrodden, oppressed, needy sinners. His grace makes us cease taking advantage of those in need but to be gracious. Grace freely bestowed on us makes us cover the sin of our brethren, instead of expose it. Grace unmerited makes us bear their burden, instead of give them a heavier burden by our backbiting. Grace unchanging makes us restore in the spirit of meekness, rather than empty them with a Pharisaical eye. “*If so be that we have tasted that the Lord is gracious*” then how can we be anything but gracious.

How good God is to lead us by love rather than law! This is not the letter of the law but the spirit of love—*faith which works by love*. Our motive is God has been gracious to us! Therefore, our light and easy yoke is “*be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph 4:32).

Amen!