

# Deuteronomy 19: 1-13

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[ 0 : 00 ] Alright, we're going to be in the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 19, verses 1-13. That's where we will be at this evening, Deuteronomy chapter 19. Starting in verse 1, we'll go down to verse 13.

We'll be looking at that portion of scripture. Let's open up with a word of prayer and then we'll get right into the text together. So let's pray. Lord, we are so thankful just to have the opportunity of coming together.

Lord, we're thankful for times of fellowship. We're thankful for times of renewal. Lord, we pray, God, that you would be with us now as we open up your word. And we pray that your word would speak to our hearts.

Lord, we pray that the truth of it would catch our attention and captivate us with who you are. Lord, that the truth of scripture would be that which transforms our life. Lord, as always, we pray that through it we would come to a greater understanding of who you are, a greater understanding of who we are, and Lord, a greater commitment to follow you in all that we do.

We just ask that you would be glorified and honored through all things that take place in this church this evening with the youth, the children, and up here. We pray, God, that it would all be honoring and glorifying in your name.

[ 1 : 10 ] And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Deuteronomy 19, just making our way through the book of Deuteronomy. And if you remember, Moses is dealing with more practical issues, at least in chapter 17 and 18.

He has just handled kind of the officers, if you will, of society or those, the leaders in society. He's dealt with what it would look like with judges, kings, the Levites, the prophets, all those people who are going to be in place there.

And he is now, again, going into just everyday affairs. We don't want to look at these matters, the organizational structure, if you will, of the nation and kind of discount it because it's there.

It's in the word of God. And the Bible tells us that all of the word is good for us, right? It's profitable for us. And it's good for correction, for rebuking, for steering us to righteousness.

So we want to approach Scripture and see it and read it. We want to catch its truth historically and hopefully look at the application it has to us physically and spiritually.

[ 2 : 14 ] So tonight's passage is much the same way because this would be one of those passages that we could kind of discount and say, well, that doesn't have much to do with us. But hopefully we'll be able to see it and we'll see the truth that it points to even in its text.

So Deuteronomy 19, starting in verse 1, and we're going to read down to verse 13. The Word of God says, When the Lord your God cuts off the nations whose land the Lord your God gives you, and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and in their houses, you shall set aside three cities for yourself in the midst of your land, which the Lord your God gives you to possess.

You shall prepare the roads for yourself and divide it into three parts, the territory of your land which the Lord your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there.

Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously. As when a man goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron head slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies, he may flee to one of these cities and live.

Otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously.

[ 3 : 32 ] Therefore I command you, saying, You shall set aside three cities for yourself. If the Lord your God enlarges your territory, just as he has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which he promised to give your fathers, if you carefully observe all this commandment which I

command you today, to love the Lord your God and to walk in his ways always, then you shall add three more cities for yourself beside these three.

So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land, which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, and blood guiltiness be on you. But if there is a man who hates his neighbor, and lies in the way for him, and rises up against him, and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there, and deliver him to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you. Deuteronomy 19, verses 1 through 13.

We see here this reference to the cities of refuge. Now, they're not referred to that as such, but we do know that it is what it's speaking of, and we've also already read of three cities of refuge that are on the eastern side of the Jordan River, those set up in the land on the other side.

When they conquered the lands of Sihon and Og, they set up three cities, as Ephraim, Manasseh, and those tribes set up over there. We see that they set aside three cities in particular, divided along that coastline, and now Moses has given them instructions that when they do cross the Jordan River, and they take possession of that land, they should set up three more cities.

[ 5 : 13 ] There's a couple of very interesting things here. The one is that obedience to God, and faithfulness to God, always brings about the promises of God, and God had promised to enlarge their territory, as they walked in faithfulness and obedience.

Moses alludes to this when he says that if you obey, and if you do everything that he commands you to do, then he will enlarge your territory, and you will need to add three more cities. Now, the sad reality is, is that the only time the nation of Israel ever got close to possessing everything that God had promised them was during the reign of David, and they didn't really possess that land. They just ruled over that land. Those kings were subject to David, and they would send him tribute, and he kind of ruled over the area that God had promised, but they never set up these other three cities of refuge because they never fully took possession.

David had the greatest amount of land that was subject to him. Solomon came in, and of course, Solomon reigned over, and his wisdom and his fame spread through all the world, at least the known world at that time, but we do know that after the death of Solomon, the kingdom crumbles, and even those who were subject to David are no longer subject, and they never get close to everything God had promised them, which is just kind of a whole other side note that God always has more in store for his people than what his people ever realized, and sadly, more than what his people usually attain to because God's blessings and promises to his people are so full and so rich, and yet his people seem to fail to lay hold of everything that God has set aside for them.

I think even as believers, there are a lot of times where I think we will be overwhelmed, and at the time, at least me, shocked when I realized the things which God would have done, the things which he could have done through me if I had walked in faithfulness and obedience and I had not failed, and all those things that just kind of seem to resonate, these things that God has in store.

[ 7 : 11 ] He always has, as Paul says, more than we could ever think, dream, or imagine, right? And I always say, well, I have a great imagination, so when I think he's above that, it kind of blows me away, and yet it is not his, it's not, see, the best way to say this, it's not the shortness of his arm, but my inability to remain faithful that stays that, right?

God always has more. He always has it there, and it's always waiting. That's a complete side note. But what we see in this passage, as it is referencing the cities of refuge, really I want you to see, how God has called his people to live with the value of human life.

Living with the value of human life. Now we're not going to use this passage to put a stamp mark on anything in today's culture, or I know some would use this as saying, well, yeah, this is why we should do corporal punishment.

Some will point back to that and say, oh, that's an Old Testament truth, and we're in the days of Christ, so we shouldn't do corporal punishment. We're not here to do that, right? We just want to look at the text, see what the text says, and see the application the text has for us, okay?

There may be a day where we approach those things, but we're not doing those today. But what we do see in this passage is really God calling his people to live differently than everyone else around them.

[ 8 : 29 ] Now, we understand that this is why he put his people where he was going to put them, right? He put them in the promised land. He put them in the middle of Canaan. They were going to

be surrounded by other nations, not smaller nations, but they're going to be surrounded by people that are not like them.

On all sides, people are going to be looking at them. And the thing that God is doing is putting his people on display. And he wants them to live differently and act differently and behave differently and experience greater blessings so that the world could see his people living in fellowship with him and say that's what it looks like to live in fellowship with the holy God, and that's what it looks like when a holy God blesses you as you live faithfully with him, right?

God is using the nation of Israel to show the world what he is and what he looks like and what it looks like to live pleasing in his sight, and he's calling the world to himself.

So a lot of the things that he's calling them to do and asking them to do is starkly different than anyone else at that time historically, right?

And that is the point. That's why he's doing it. He wants them to be set apart. He wants them to stand out. He wants them to be radical, if you will.

[ 9 : 45 ] He wants it to be really telling. To live life in fellowship with God is completely different. That's not just an Old Testament truth, right? That's a biblical truth because all throughout Scripture we see this.

God sets his people apart. Whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him on the left also. That kind of sets you apart a little bit, right? If someone asks you to go one mile, go with him too.

In our time, oh, they don't set you apart. Well, what if that somebody is a Roman soldier who gives you all of his gear that he has to carry on a march and he has the legal obligation or he can legally ask you to carry his gear for one mile and you cannot refuse that.

But after one mile, you can give all his gear back to him because that's as far as the law goes. And Jesus says, if he gives you all his gear and he tells you to carry it, I'll carry it too. It looks different, right?

I mean, it causes you to stand apart. And this is the point because it is not really about us. It's not really about that. It's about the God we serve. And in this passage, over and over again, there's this repetition of the covenant name of God, Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh, the Lord your God, the Lord your God, the Lord your God.

[ 10 : 54 ] Now, Brother Jerry just gave me a different translation of scripture. I almost thought about reading it this evening to you. It's called the Legacy Standard Bible, LSB. It's not very popular.

It actually just came out this past year. But what it is, it came from the Lachman Foundation, which is the same people who do the New American Standard Bible. I'm not here to get into Bible translations and while we have them, while we can do that some other time, I have really my theories.

That's kind of a, that's a really big subject to me, okay? So, I go with the New American Standard, but the Legacy Standard takes the New American Standard, but it, it, it like, I don't want to say it builds on it, but when it says Lord, it puts Yahweh in there.

So when you're reading it, you're actually reading Yahweh, Yahweh, Yahweh. And it puts the name of God in the text and makes it stand out. And really, just reading it now, it's just kind of jumping out to me like over and over and over again.

We have this covenant name of God being repeated. And the theme is about living with a value of human life. And that's the whole reason why there are these cities of refuge.

[ 12 : 00 ] It's because God doesn't want His people to be like everybody else. Oh, you killed my, you killed my brother, I'm going to kill you. It's an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, right? Not like that. He wants them to live with value.

There are the judges and the kings and the priests and the prophets. There are all these legal matters there, but there are no police, right? There are no police who are going to come in and investigate the matter. There are no detectives.

They policed themselves, right? If you and I had an issue, we would either settle that issue or we would go to the judge together and settle that issue. There are no police who are going to come and entertain me.

They were policing themselves, but they were to live differently among themselves. And the greatest difference they were to have is they were to value the life of an individual. And we see this throughout this passage.

And the first thing we see is there has to be, for life to be valued, there has to be a recognition. And the recognition is this. God was giving them the land, right? He introduces this much like he does every other radical concept, every other new idea, every other command to live differently than anyone else.

[ 13 : 05 ] Moses introduces it like this. When the Lord your God cuts off the nations whose land the Lord your God gives you and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and in their houses, then you shall do this.

There's almost like always this reminder, right? Recognize this fact. Where you go, you're not earning it, you're giving it. You're going into a land that's going to be given to you, not because you deserve it, not because you're stronger, not because you're mightier, not because you're more perfect, but it is this recognition that God is blessing his people.

Now, let's, again, let's keep it in context. If there were a people who did not deserve to be blessed, at this time in history, it was probably the nation of Israel.

For 40 years, they've walked in rebellion, murmuring and complaining and we find out later on and throughout the Old Testament text, worshiping false gods the whole time they're going through there, even though they're experiencing the blessings of God, kind of fighting within one another, acting immorally, all these things, these wickedness, you know, saying, well, here's God leading us, but we don't want to go there.

We'd rather not. And all these for 40 years, they've seen the blessings of God, they've seen the provisions of God, and yet they've rebelled against that and they've always wanted to go back, always wanted to go back, but yet there's this recognition, in spite of you, God is going to provide this land for you.

[ 14 : 34 ] He's going to give it, He's going to dispossess nations greater than you. He's going to give you houses you did not build, gardens you did not plant, wells you did not dig, and He's going to provide it for you, and when you go there, these are the things you must do.

Now, along with that recognition that you are about to experience the blessings of God, the recognition is God has the right to tell you what to do with the land, because it's His land.

This question we wrestle with, does God have the right to move some people off the land and put other people on it? And the simple answer to that is yes. Because everything we see was created by Him, through Him, and what's the other part of that we find?

For Him. It's His. Right? He has the absolute right. It's His land.

Now, they were going to be tenants of His land. They were going to possess it for a time, some time. They are called to possess it for all time, but they really never do, even though they're still on a small portion of that land.

[ 15 : 42 ] But the recognition here is God absolutely has the right to tell me what I should do inside the land. He's about to give me. He absolutely has that right.

Because I didn't earn it. I didn't fight for it. I didn't buy it. He gave it to me. Therefore, He has the right to tell me what I should do with it.

Now, let's bring that to the other side of the cross. Some radical concepts, at least it shouldn't be radical, is a biblical concept that is absolutely radical to the thought of American, Christians.

Almost said American Christianity, but I didn't want to do that. The reason I didn't want to do that is because I always have this thing that plays over in my mind, and I know I'm kind of rambling, but just stay with me just for a minute.

Tony Evans says, you can never put an adjective in front of the noun Christianity because the adjective always defines the noun, and if you say you're a white Christian or you're a black Christian or you're an Asian Christian or you're an American Christian, now the adjective is defining the Christianity, and nothing should ever define your Christianity, right?

[ 16 : 52 ] because you are a Christian who is white or a Christian who is Asian or a Christian who is black or a Christian who is American. It always needs to be in the, as he says, agitative sense. A Christian needs to be that which defines everything else.

Rather than defining your Christianity, it needs to be that which defines you, which leads us to that other portion of things. God has the absolute right to tell us what to do with our life because he redeemed it and bought it.

Just like he had the right, we recognize that, to tell them what to do with the land because he's giving it to them, he also has the right to tell us how we should live, what we should do, how we

should behave, how we should treat people, how we should live with value, how we should live with respect, how we should live with love.

He has the absolute right to tell us and to dictate to us every aspect of our life because there's this great word called redemption. Redemption means purchased, bought, to take ownership of.

If we are redeemed by the blood of the land, that means God has paid the price for our life and therefore has the right, we recognize that, he has the right to dictate what goes on there.

[18:05] So there's the recognition to live with this value of human life. First, there has to be this recognition because they never would have had cities of refuge if they decided, hey, we get to determine what we do with our land.

This is our land. I can determine what I want to do with it, right? I'm going to do what I want to do, how I want to do, the way I want to do it. And, you know, we understand that, but God says, no, this is my land.

You're just going to live in it for a while and this is what you need to do. So we recognize that.

Secondly, we see that there's also these refuges. There has to be a place of refuge. So you got recognition and refuge. These three cities of refuge were to be something that was standing, right? They were to always be there. It was to be a place. God is calling his people to make a place that is available and accessible so that if someone does something unintentionally, they have a place to go to, right?

Think of the mercy and the grace and the compassion in this. God says, set aside three cities so that someone can go there if they need to. It is God's heart that man would have a refuge to run to in a time of need.

[19:11] It is God's heart that man would have a refuge to run to if he did something unplanned or unintentional and accidental because God understands as one commentator says, we have to love the reality that God deals with actual events.

God does not deal in the spiritual realm where things don't go wrong. He deals in real life where things happen, right? He deals in real life where people make mistakes, where there's accidents, where there's all these things, but the mercy of God provides a refuge for man and his faults.

And the mercy of God calls for man to establish these cities or these places of refuge where man can flee to and therefore find a place of deliverance from the blood avenger.

Now, blood avenger or the avenger of blood was a near kinsman who took it upon himself to be responsible to make sure you paid for what you did. And, I mean, it's not that it was a bad thing. It was just that if you killed someone in my family, then all of a sudden I have the responsibility because I'm the nearest kinsman to settle the matter, right? And I'm going to make sure that things are equal.

[20:25] But God realizes that this cycle just goes on. Well, if something happens to me and the nearest kinsman runs up and the blood avenger goes and, you know, going to settle the matter, well, then that nearest kinsman from that individual, that blood avenger, that's a spiral, right?

Of this blood avenger after blood avenger after blood avenger and there's this downward spiral of everybody saying, well, I'm going to make matters straight. I'm going to make matters straight. I'm going to make matters straight. Well, God says the only way you make matters straight is if there's a place of refuge for man to flee to.

And he graciously calls them to establish these places of refuge where man can run and find at least fair judgment.

We'll get to the rest of it here in just a moment. Someone who isn't speaking in anger, someone who isn't speaking, you know, passionately because this is my brother or this is my, you know, my father or anything like that.

Someone who's speaking clarity and they look at you and they give wise judgment. Now, we know the great truth is the reason God established the cities of refuge is because he's going to provide a person of refuge.

[21:34] But there's a great stark contrast between the person of refuge who is Jesus Christ and the cities of refuge which he calls them to. Because the cities of refuge are places where an innocent individual who made a mistake runs and finds at least I don't want to say forgiveness but we don't want to go there because we'll get to that in just a minute but at least finds a fair judgment.

Right? So a city of refuge is where a person who did something unintentionally or accidentally was not premeditated was not planned it was not intentional it was accidental and the city of refuge is

provided where this individual can go and find fair judgment.

That's the city of refuge. The person of refuge who is Jesus Christ because let's think about this just for a moment. In the Old Testament God has a God has an offering or a place of refuge for every unintentional sin.

There is this concept even in the law that there is no offering for the high handed sin. Now the high handed sin is the sin that says I know what God told me to do but I don't care I'm going to do it anymore.

It's a sin that willingly disobeys. There is no offering. Okay? There is no sacrifice that you can give. There's no city you can run to.

[ 23 : 03 ] There's no place you can go. You cannot find forgiveness for a sin that says I know I shouldn't do this but I'm going to do it anyway. That's what a high handed sin is. It is one which has full knowledge yet decides to do it anyway.

No sacrifice found for an intentional sin. No place of refuge found for an intentional sin. Now contrast that with the person of refuge who is Jesus Christ.

The only people that run to Jesus Christ are people who know they are guilty of sin. who understand because let's go ahead and admit it.

Every one of us sin intentionally. We may not have premeditated putting ourselves into a position of sin but we have this great thing called a conscience.

And as Paul says there are things written on our hearts which we know. So when we look to the law there is no hope for us. Maybe you're better than me but when I look to the law there is no hope for me because I know if I'm being completely honest with myself there have been times a lot more times than I would like to admit where I knew what I was doing was wrong but I decided to do it anyway.

[ 24 : 20 ] And in the law there is no sacrifice for that. But in the person of refuge that God has provided in his son Jesus Christ there is forgiveness for that.

Because see the person of refuge the city of refuge is where an individual who accidentally did something goes to find a fair judgment to be forgiven or to be at least sheltered from the blood avenger.

The person of refuge who is Jesus Christ is where a guilty person runs and Jesus pays the penalty. Jesus takes the penalty.

He takes that which is due. But the account is the same. God in his mercy provides refuge for the sinner.

And God in his grace shows his value for human life to cleanse the nation from blood guiltiness as he calls it. So we see a recognition we see a refuge.

[ 25 : 24 ] Number three we see a requirement. Now the requirement is pretty easy. At least looking at it it's easy. He says you should establish three cities.

Divide the territory which he's going to give you in three equal parts and put a city in each part. But I love this phrase and it kind of stands out to me. You shall prepare the roads yourself.

The reason I love that is because God says make sure everybody can get there. You shall prepare the roads yourself. Make sure there's a road to the city.

Rabbinic tradition says rabbis Jewish rabbis throughout the ages tradition says that at every crossroad in the nation of Israel there was a sign which pointed to the nearest city of refuge.

So when you're going down the road if you came to a crossroad there's a sign that says there's a city of refuge this way. They're always marked. And that was part of the requirement.

[ 26 : 31 ] Because God says not only do you set aside three cities and not only do you set those cities aside in places equally distributed among the nation but you also make sure that they have roads that make them easily accessible so that if someone needs to go there they don't weary themselves out before they get there and then be overtaken by the avenger of blood you shall prepare the roads.

Now in my mind I think of old I've had a lot I've had the benefit over the years of hanging out with a whole bunch of old preachers and I love the way those old preachers talk.

Some of them look at me every night and go now that right there son that'll preach. when I think about that when we know that God didn't provide a city of refuge but he provided a person of refuge and God called the people to provide a road to the cities how much more should the church be busy about making sure the road to the Savior is not full of hindrances and obstacles.

Because unfortunately most of the time on the road to the person of refuge people are tripping over believers. not unbelievers. And what's happened is the church has cluttered the road with all of our arguing and bickering and fighting and secondary issues and it has kind of made the road inaccessible because we have all of our other side issues which we would like to have and we have all these things along the road when really the only thing that road matters for is if it gets you to the place of refuge.

The road is secondary the city of refuge was primary. Every sign should point to the city of refuge. Every crossroad should be clearly marked of the city of refuge and the road should clearly be defined and if you go this way you won't miss it you'll run into the city of refuge.

[ 28 : 27 ] I am afraid that too many churches and too often possibly maybe even this church and I don't mean that to be despairing to anybody but me that the road we pave points to everywhere else but to Jesus Christ because we've put a lot of secondary issues along the road and the main thing is not always the main thing because really the road that the church is called to upkeep there are things along that road but the main thing on that road is the person of refuge who is Jesus Christ and if someone travels down the road with us as a church and they never meet Jesus Christ that road really has been useless.

I heard a staggering statistic today LifeWake Research did a statistic of believers of believers 55% of believers will never share Jesus Christ with a friend.

55% of believers will never share Christ with a friend there's a lot of things along that road but that road should only be in existence for one thing.

That's the responsibility. God gave them responsibility. You shall prepare the road. Make sure people know how to get there. Everything we do as a church quite honestly ought to point to one person and that person is Jesus Christ and if people come into contact with us it should all be pointed to one place and that person is that place of refuge and everything the church does needs to be focused as Paul said I'm intent on one purpose.

Paul said I'm not getting caught up in secondary matters and I'm not getting caught up in all these other things I want people to meet Jesus Christ because that's the road the church has been called to maintain.

[ 30 : 27 ] Fourth and finally there's a realization and the realization is this in the text the realization is not everyone who runs to the city of refuge is innocent because if you build a city of refuge and say if you run to the city of the blood avenger can't overtake you even the guilty will run there because he says what if about the individual who planned and premeditated and laid in wait for an individual and killed him if that man runs to the city of refuge now you remember where I said the judges were at the judges are at the gates of the cities right a judge was to be at every gate that's important you need to know that in scripture because when you're reading the Old Testament all these things happen at the gate because gates are important because gates symbolize places of authority places of judgment places of security right so everything's happening at the gates so he says that this man who intentionally caused harm and caused the death of an individual which he hated and he had planned this and he premeditated this and he runs to the city of refuge you shouldn't keep him there right you shouldn't keep him there because he says you don't have to release him the people from his city right the men who sit at the gates of his city should come get him there should be justice at every gate and they should get him and bring him back to the avenger of bliss if there he is do with him what you want right this is not police these are judges who are making wise decisions and they the judgment is cast but there is this realization that not all who run there are innocent some are just looking for the benefit without following the practice we understand that too is not all who run to Jesus are coming to Jesus in sincerity some want the benefit without the practice some want the blessing of eternal life without the life of relationship and commitment but there is always that discernment now before we close here we need to understand

God calls people to live with the value of human life and the value of human life is to allow an individual who unintentionally and accidentally did something that harmed another to have a place to go but we don't need to leave this passage and think oh so there is no consequences for even accidental sins because there are always consequences for sin because I don't know if you notice in this text it says when he runs to the city of refuge he should live there live there because if you remember when we looked at cities of refuge before I believe it was in the book of numbers there is this requirement that if I did something accidentally and it led to the death of another individual even if it was an accident and my heart is broken over it my life is torn up over it I didn't intend to do it this

was a dear friend of mine and I didn't mean for it to happen it was an accident and I can't just live life as if things never happen I can go to the city of refuge and I can find a place of safety and place of security but here is the truth

I have to live at the city of refuge until the death of the high priest and I can't leave because if I leave then the avenger of blood finds me they are free to do to me whatever they want to do to do it so I have the consequences of no longer living my life as if nothing happened because something did happen I have to live at the city of refuge my life is forever changed because of the mistake I made and we see this even in this passage they go to the place of refuge and they live there they stay there now to us we saw that application we have a great high priest who is Jesus Christ and our high priest will never die so we live in his presence forever and ever and ever and ever right but in this application it's not like you could accidentally do something and just go on about your everyday life like nothing happened because sin always has consequences even the accidental and it's going to radically change your life forever around our house as the kids are growing up we still have one that's growing up well we have four that are growing up but we still have one that we say this to well I didn't mean to do it and while that may be a true statement my response is usually but did you mean not to do it a lot of times we do things in our life but we didn't mean to do that there's also something to be said well did we mean not to do that because there's always consequences for that mistake this one in particular you don't get to live on your farm cutting your trees down anymore you gotta live at the city of refuge the rest of the high priest life if not the rest of your life but God values human life and won't let innocent life be spilled and he causes people to live with that value as well Deuteronomy 19 verses 1 through 13 thank you brother so so!