

Moses – part 29

Do not mistreat or abuse foreigners

by Victor Torres

Exo 22:21 (CEV) Do not mistreat or abuse foreigners who live among you. Remember, you were foreigners in Egypt.

Many people have mistreated or abused others using the Bible. Racism is just one form of abuse where the victims are mistreated because they came from a different race. The abusers have misinterpreted some of the verses in the Bible to give themselves reasons to mistreat other races.

The Lord gave the law above to Moses and the Israelites to protect the foreigners living among them. After telling them not to mistreat and abuse foreigners, he tells them “Remember, you were foreigners in Egypt”.

Why does He need to remind them of this fact? In chapter 23, the Lord repeats this command, and gives us a little more detail.

Exo 23:9 (CEV) Don't mistreat foreigners. You were foreigners in Egypt, **and you know what it is like.**

“You know what it is like” to be foreigners, so don't mistreat foreigners. In Deuteronomy, the Lord repeats this command and clearly shows us the reason why He didn't want Israel to abuse foreigners.

Deu 24:17 (ERV) "You must make sure that foreigners and orphans are treated fairly. And you must never take clothes from a widow as security.

Deu 24:18 **Remember, you were poor slaves in Egypt. And the LORD your God took you from that place and set you free.** That is why I tell you to do these things for the poor.

That's why the Lord gave that command. He was telling Israel: “Don't treat the foreigners like the Egyptians treated you when you were in Egypt”.

How did the Egyptians treat the Israelites?

Exo 1:11 (ERV) The Egyptians decided to make **life hard for the Israelites**, so they put slave masters over the people. These masters forced the Israelites to build the cities of Pithom and Rameses for the king. The king used these cities to store grain and other things.

Exo 1:12 The Egyptians forced the Israelites to **work harder and harder**. But the harder they worked, the more they grew and spread, and the more the Egyptians became afraid of them.

Exo 1:13 So the Egyptians **made them work even harder.**

Exo 1:14 They made life hard for the Israelites. They forced the Israelites to work hard at making bricks and mortar and to work hard in the fields. **The Egyptians showed no mercy in all the hard work they made the Israelites do!**

"The Egyptians showed no mercy in all the hard work they made the Israelites do!". Why did they treat the Israelites this way? Did the Israelites do something wrong to provoke this abuse from the Egyptians? No, they did nothing wrong.

The Egyptians were just insecure because Israel was growing too fast.

Exo 1:7 (ESV) But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; **they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong**, so that the land was filled with them.

They were afraid Israel would join their enemies.

Exo 1:8 (ESV) Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

Exo 1:9 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

Exo 1:10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, **if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."**

That's when they started making life hard for the Israelites, when they got scared that Israel would join their enemies and fight against them.

Even before that, when Joseph was living and he was still ruling Egypt, the Egyptians looked down on the Israelites. Here's Joseph talking to his brothers:

Gen 46:33 (GW) Now, when Pharaoh calls for you and asks, 'What kind of work do you do?'

Gen 46:34 you must answer, 'We have taken care of herds all our lives, as our ancestors have done.' You must say this so that you may live in the region of Goshen, **because all shepherds are disgusting to Egyptians."**

That's the essence of racism. When you look down on other people because of their race or their culture. The Egyptians were great city builders. You can see that from the pyramids and temples that still survive until now after thousands of years. Other translations say the "Egyptians will have nothing to do with shepherds".

The life of a shepherd is a life of faith. You have to trust God to provide a field for your livestock to graze on. That kind of lifestyle is not attractive to the Egyptians, because they take great pride in the works of their hands.

They treated the Israelites horribly, which is why the Lord kept reminding Israel not to treat the foreigners with them in the same way.

Exo 22:21 (CEV) Do not mistreat or abuse foreigners who live among you.
Remember, you were foreigners in Egypt.

It would have been easy for Israel to look down on foreigners. At this point, they were the only chosen people of God, and they were not aware that eventually the other nations around them will also be saved. Eventually, Israel disobeyed the Lord and mistreated the foreigners among them.

Zec 7:8 (ERV) This is the LORD'S message to Zechariah:

Zec 7:9 "This is what the LORD All-Powerful said: 'You must do what is right and fair. You must be kind and show mercy to each other.

Zec 7:10 **Don't hurt widows and orphans, strangers (foreigners), or poor people. Don't even think of doing bad things to each other!"**

Zec 7:11 **But they refused to listen and refused to do what he wanted.** They closed their ears so that they could not hear what God said.

Zec 7:12 They were very stubborn and would not obey the law. The LORD All-Powerful used his Spirit and sent messages to his people through the prophets. But the people would not listen, so the LORD All-Powerful became very angry.

Zec 7:13 So the LORD All-Powerful said, "I called to them, and they did not answer. So now, if they call to me, I will not answer.

Zec 7:14 I will bring the other nations against them like a storm. They didn't know those nations, but the country will be destroyed after those nations pass through. **This pleasant country will be destroyed."**

Israel was destroyed because they abused the foreigners who lived among them. The Bible says all those things were written about Israel "for our admonition" (1Co 10:11), to sternly warn us not to do what Egypt did to Israel, or what Israel did to the foreigners living among them. Why do we need these warnings? Because we naturally tend to look down on people. Humans, by nature, are proud creatures who constantly think that things that we have are better than what other people have.

When we do that, we are forgetting that everything that we have are only given to us.

1Co 4:7 (CEV) What is so special about you? What do you have that you were not given? **And if it was given to you, how can you brag?**

We are teaching you these things so that you can remain humble and thankful for everything you receive from God. We want you to continue to obey God's commands.

We are not telling you to join anti-racist demonstrations or anti-racist groups. The Lord said His kingdom is not of this world, so we should stay out of the affairs of this world (2Ti 2:4).

Joh 18:36 (MKJV) Jesus answered, **My kingdom is not of this world.** If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would fight so that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here.

We should recognize racism as evil, but we should not resist evil in this world. The Lord is in control of everything, including the evil that is growing in the hearts of the people of this world. He will one day come and conquer all the kingdoms of this world, but we should stay away from politics and any affairs of this world.

The lesson here is to never look down on people because of their race or culture. We should remember that we all came from Adam and Eve, and in the eyes of God, it doesn't matter what race you come from. What matters to Him is what's in your heart.

1Sa 16:7 (ESV) But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: **man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.**"

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart". We should think like Christ and not like the people of this world. He told Moses and Israel that "he is not partial" to anyone, in other words, He treats all people the same.

Deu 10:17 (ESV) For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, **who is not partial** and takes no bribe.

The Lord loves the sojourner (foreigner) and He tells His people to love them also.

Deu 10:18 (ESV) He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, **and loves the sojourner**, giving him food and clothing.

Deu 10:19 **Love the sojourner**, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

If God loves the sojourner, and He also tells us to love the sojourner, we must then ask who is the spiritual sojourner.

Act 10:34 (CEV) Peter then said: Now I am certain that **God treats all people alike**.

Act 10:35 (ESV) **but in every nation anyone** who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Now that we know that physical race doesn't matter to God, it is important to know who the spiritual sojourners or foreigners are.

Eph 2:10 (GNB) God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do.

Eph 2:11 You Gentiles by birth---called "the uncircumcised" by the Jews, who call themselves the circumcised (which refers to what men do to their bodies)---remember what you were in the past.

Eph 2:12 At that time you were apart from Christ. **You were foreigners and did not belong to God's chosen people**. You had no part in the covenants, which were based on God's promises to his people, and you lived in this world without hope and without God

There it is! When we did not belong to God's chosen people, we were spiritual foreigners to Him. But now that we belong to Christ, we are now part of the holy nation of God. The spiritual foreigners are the people who don't belong to the body of Christ.

Paul tells us in verse 11, "remember what you were in the past". Does this sound familiar? Of course it does. The Lord repeatedly told Moses and Israel, "remember that you were foreigners in Egypt". Egypt is a symbol of Babylon, and we need to remember that we, the elect, all came out of Babylon. That's what we were in the past – spiritual foreigners. And the trick to not hate people in Babylon, the spiritual foreigners, is to always remember that we were also foreigners in the past.

It is only by God's grace that we now belong to the holy nation of God, so Paul reminds us that we have nothing to boast.

Eph 2:8 (GNB) For it is by God's grace that you have been saved through faith. **It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it.**