# *Exodus*
# *Living the Law*

Lesson #9 for August 30, 2025

Scriptures: Exodus 21:1-32; 22:16-23:33; 2 Kings 19:35; Matthew 5:38-48; Romans 12:19; Matthew 16:27.

1. What does *living the Law* mean? To what does it refer?

> [From the Bible study guide=BSG:] God desired His people to be different from the surrounding nations. He wanted them established as a devoted community of faith who would live under His leadership and authority. Everyone would be subject to His law. Judges were to be appointed as administrators of the law, and the priests were to teach it. Parents also played a crucial role.
>
> In any culture, the laws reveal the ideals, goals, intent, and character of the lawmaker. For example, when Pharaoh ordered every Hebrew male baby killed, this law revealed what he was like: evil. In contrast, if a king made a law that every 18-year-old in the kingdom would be awarded a free higher education, many would consider this evidence of the king's generosity and desire for his country to prosper.
>
> God's law reveals Him, that is, His goodness, love, values, righteousness, and His restraints against evil. As the law is holy and just, so is God. While creating space for an abundant life, the law also helps protect us from dangers and calamities. Respect for God, for each other, and for life's values were the basis of His legislative system.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, August 23.‡

## God Gave More Than the Decalogue—He Gave "The Code of the Covenant"

> [BSG:] In addition to the moral law (also known as the Decalogue, or God's Ten Promises, which are traditionally called the Ten Commandments), the Lord also gave to Moses the *mishpatim*—literally judgments—also translated as ordinances, rules, laws, or regulations. **These laws practically applied the principles of the Decalogue to the Israelites' daily life.** This section of laws, written on a scroll by Moses, was called "the Book of the Covenant" *(Exod. 24:7)*, and this "Covenant Code" is enlarged upon in Exodus 20:22–23:19. Following is God's sermonette on how, and upon what conditions, He will lead His people to the Promised Land *(Exod. 23:20–33)*.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 119.†‡§
>
> [BSG:] Exodus 19–24 deals with the establishment *(Exod. 19:3–8)* and renewal, or confirmation, of God's covenant with His people in a solemn ceremony involving the sprinkling of blood, indicating the sealing of that covenant *(Exod. 24:3–8)*. In between, like two bookends, are presented the **foundational principles of God's character in relation to humanity.** These universal and eternal values, having no cultural or temporal limits, are expressed in the moral laws, the Decalogue or the Ten Promises *(Exod. 20:1–17)*, and afterward explained in more detail in the Code of the Covenant *(Exod. 20:22–23:33)*. The application and extension of the Decalogue in the form of the Covenant Code, for practical reasons, may be structured in the following way:

The Prologue *(Exod. 20:22–21:1)*

1. Cases involving Hebrew slaves *(Exod. 21:2–11)*
2. Cases involving death penalties *(Exod. 21:12–17)*
3. Cases involving personal injuries *(Exod. 21:18–32)*
4. Cases involving property damage, protection, and stealing *(Exod. 21:33–22:15)*
5. Cases involving life in society *(Exod. 22:16–31)*
6. Cases involving justice and neighborhood *(Exod. 23:1–9)*
7. Laws related to sacred seasons *(Exod. 23:10–19)*

The Epilogue *(Exod. 23:20–33)*

The principles behind these Covenant Code regulations may be applied even today; however, we must do so without implementing the penalties or punishments attached to them, because they were given for, and limited to, Israel's theocratic system. The theocracy ended, together with the sacrificial laws, with the death of Jesus on the cross *(Dan. 9:25–27, Matt. 27:51, Col. 2:14)* and with the stoning of deacon Stephen, in A.D. 34 *(Acts 7:54–60)*. Stephen's death marked the end of the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24–27, fulfilling the Jews' dispensation of time and marking the beginning of the gospel being proclaimed to the whole world, to both Jews and Gentiles *(Matt. 28:18–20, Acts 1:8)*.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 120.†‡§

2. God had a wonderful plan for his children. All they needed to do was follow His directions. While the Ten Commandments/Ten Promises/Ten Words are very familiar as found in Exodus 20:3-17, the specific details of how they are to be carried out may not be so familiar! God gave them a "Code of the Covenant" to help explain the Decalogue.

[BSG:] God is expanding and explaining the Ten Promises, or the Ten Words, to His people in the Covenant Code. This amplification of specific commandments can be directly detected in the following passages [which state the Decalogue in different words]:

1. The first promise about the unique and living God is in Exodus 20:23a and Exodus 23:13.
2. The second promise about true worship and saying no to idols is in Exodus 20:23b; Exodus 22:20; and Exodus 23:24, 32b, 33.
3. The third promise about reverence to God and what He represents is in Exodus 22:28a.
4. The fourth promise about Sabbath rest is in Exodus 23:10–12.
5. The fifth promise about honoring parents is in Exodus 21:15, 17.
6. The sixth promise about respecting life is in Exodus 21:12–14, 23, 29.
7. The seventh promise about respecting marriage is in Exodus 22:16, 17.
8. The eighth promise about respecting property is in Exodus 22:1–4.
9. The ninth promise about respecting the reputations of people and the truth is in Exodus 22:11 and Exodus 23:1–9.
10. The tenth promise about respecting self by being pure in mind and not coveting permeates the entire Covenant Code.

These specific laws (casuistic [based on actual cases] or apodictic [irrefutable])

reflect the Decalogue in the broader sense; for example, all prescriptions regarding injuries or harm point to the sixth promise, and regulations regarding theft to the eighth promise. **The goal of these "judgments" is to help believers to be men and women of integrity.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 119.†‡

3. What did Ellen White have to say about the state of the minds of the Israelites after being subjected to slavery in Egypt?

> [From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] The minds of the people, **blinded and debased by slavery and heathenism**, were not prepared to appreciate fully the far-reaching principles of God's ten precepts. That the obligations of the Decalogue might be more fully understood and enforced, additional precepts were given, **illustrating and applying the principles of the Ten Commandments**. These laws were called **judgments**, both because they were framed in infinite wisdom and equity and because the magistrates were to give judgment according to them. Unlike the Ten Commandments, **they were delivered privately to Moses**, who was to communicate them to the people.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets** 310.†‡ [https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p84.1378&index=0]‡

4. God did not expect an uneducated, former-slave population to understand clearly the original Ten Promises/Ten Words. So, He spelled out details as to how they were to be practiced.

5. More than just giving the laws, God arranged for the appointment of judges to help discriminate in individual cases.

> [BSG:] In God's mercy, He taught the judges how to deal with people in various situations regarding property rights. Several case studies are enumerated, indicating what to do if a bull attacked a neighbor's bull, if people stole a domestic animal and sold it, if animals grazed in the field or vineyard of another owner, if an item a person borrowed was stolen from him, or if a hired animal was injured or died *(Exod. 21:33–22:15)*.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, August 25.‡§

6. God spelled out a lot of details about immoral sexual practices; the treatment of foreigners, widows and orphans; lending money; and giving testimony. (Exodus 22:16-23:9)

> [BSG:] God's laws included different issues. There were specific regulations against putting down or humiliating people. He did not want any kind of exploitation. In His mercy, God corrects the sinful tendencies of the human heart and restrains people's natural inclinations. Society was to be kept safe, evil eliminated, and good interpersonal relationships cultivated. Justice and love must rule all actions.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, August 25.‡

## The Sabbath and Festivals

7. What was the reason that God gave for observing the Sabbath?

> [BSG:] The Sabbath and the festivals were about worship and were reminders of crucial events in salvation history. Worship was carefully regulated because this was the theological basis for all other activities. The **Sabbath was established at Creation** *(Gen. 2:2, 3; Exod. 20:8–11)*, **was connected to**

**Israel's deliverance and redemption** *(Deut. 5:12–15)*, and, in a powerful way, **points to worshiping God as our Creator, Redeemer, and Lord** *(Mark 2:27, 28)*.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, August 25.†‡§

**Exodus 20:8-11**: [8] "Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy. [9]You have six days in which to do your work, [10]but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. [11]In six days I, the Lord, made the earth, the sky, the sea, and everything in them, but on the seventh day I rested. That is why I, the Lord, blessed the Sabbath and made it holy."—American Bible Society. (©1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*®* [*GNT*] (*Today's English Version*) [*TEV*], Second Edition, Exodus 20:8-11). Philadelphia: American Bible Society [abbreviated as *Good News Bible-TEV*].‡§

8. Forty years after the thundering of God giving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, why did Moses change the reason for the Sabbath as he was telling the Israelites shortly before they were to enter the land of Canaan?

**Deuteronomy 5:12-15**: [12] " 'Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy, as I, the Lord your God, have commanded you. [13]You have six days in which to do your work, [14]but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to work—neither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. Your slaves must rest just as you do. **[15]Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, the Lord your God, rescued you by my great power and strength.** That is why I command you to observe the Sabbath.' "—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

**Deuteronomy 5:22**: "These are the commandments the Lord gave to all of you when you were gathered at the mountain. When he spoke with a mighty voice from the fire and from the thick clouds, he gave these commandments and no others. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

9. ***Does it bother you that what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy—which differs slightly from what is written in Exodus—is what God said were "these commandments and no others"? Is Deuteronomy more accurate than Exodus? Why do we almost always quote Exodus?***

10. **God outlined some festivals or celebrations for the Israelites to observe.**

[BSG:] Meanwhile, there were three crucial festivals that Israel was required to celebrate each year: (1) the **Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread** in the spring (usually about mid-March to mid-April); (2) **Pentecost or the Feast of Harvest** (or the Feast of Weeks) seven weeks after the previous festival, thus beginning 50 days later; and (3) the **Feast of Tabernacles** (or Booths) or the Feast of Ingathering in the fall (usually about mid-September to mid-October; *see also Exod. 34:18–26, Lev. 23:4–44, Num. 28:16–29:40, Deut. 16:1–16)*.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday.†‡§

## God's Original Plan for the Conquest of Canaan

11. Then, God moved on to talk to them about His plans for them. Obviously, He planned for them to go directly to the land of Canaan, follow His guidance, and conquer the land.

12. God was to send an angel ahead of Israel to displace all the people so that Israel would not have to fight; Israel's foes would run away. Israel was to reject all the "gods" of the Canaanites.

**Exodus 23:20-33**: 20 "**I will send an angel ahead of you to protect you as you travel and to bring you to the place which I have prepared. 21Pay attention to him and obey him. Do not rebel against him, for I have sent him, and he will not pardon such rebellion.** 22But if you obey him and do everything I command, I will fight against all your enemies. 23My angel will go ahead of you and take you into the land of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I will destroy them. **24Do not bow down to their gods or worship them, and do not adopt their religious practices. Destroy their gods and break down their sacred stone pillars.** 25If you worship me, the Lord your God, I will bless you with food and water and take away all your illnesses. 26In your land no woman will have a miscarriage or be without children. I will give you long lives.

27 **"I will make the people who oppose you afraid of me; I will bring confusion among the people against whom you fight, and I will make all your enemies turn and run from you. 28I will throw your enemies into a panic; I will drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites as you advance. 29I will not drive them out within one year; if I did, the land would become deserted, and the wild animals would be too many for you. 30Instead, I will drive them out little by little, until there are enough of you to take possession of the land. 31I will make the borders of your land extend from the Gulf of Aqaba to the Mediterranean Sea and from the desert to the Euphrates River. I will give you power over the inhabitants of the land, and you will drive them out as you advance. 32Do not make any agreement with them or with their gods. 33Do not let those people live in your country; if you do, they will make you sin against me. If you worship their gods, it will be a fatal trap for you."***—Good News Bible-TEV*.*†

[BSG:] God's original plan was that, at the sound of the ram's horn, His people would "come up to the mountain" *(Exod. 19:13, ESV)*. What actually happened, and why did the Israelites miss this great invitation that God offered them *(Exodus 19:16b; Exodus 20:19; and Deuteronomy 5:5, 25)*?*—Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 122-123.‡§

[BSG:] In addition, God promised that He would drive the nations out ahead of Israel by two unusual but very effective methods: (1) by sending terror and fear upon wicked nations, and (2) with hornets that would drive the people away. **Before the Israelites arrived in the new territory, their enemies would abandon the place**, and "turn their backs and run" *(Exod. 23:27, 28, NIV)*.*—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 26.†‡

## The Conquest of Canaan

[BSG:] God assures the Israelites that just as He fought for them in the Red Sea experience *(Exod. 14:13, 14, 26–31)*, He will do so again when they enter the Promised Land. He Himself will go ahead of them and defeat their enemies *(Exod. 23:20–31)*. The divine "I" appears 13 times in the NIV [*sic*] translation of

this passage, where God declares what He will do for Israel, enabling them to inherit the new territory: (1) " 'I am sending an angel ahead of you' " *(Exod. 23:20, NIV)*; (2) " 'I will be an enemy to your enemies' " *(Exod. 23:22a, NIV)*; (3) " '[I] . . . will oppose those who oppose you' " *(Exod. 23:22b, NIV)*; (4) " 'I will wipe them out' " *(Exod. 23:23, NIV)*; (5) " 'I will take away sickness from among you' " *(Exod. 23:25, NIV)*; (6) " 'I will give you a full life span' " *(Exod. 23:26, NIV)*; (7) " 'I will send my terror ahead of you' " *(Exod. 23:27a, NIV)*; (8) " 'I will . . . throw into confusion every nation you encounter' " *(Exod. 23:27b, NIV)*; (9) " 'I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run' " *(Exod. 23:27c, NIV)*; (10) " **'I will send the hornet ahead of you'** " *(Exod. 23:28, NIV)*; (11) " 'Little by little I will drive them out before you' " *(Exod. 23:30, NIV)*; (12) " 'I will establish your borders' " *(Exod. 23:31a, NIV)*; and (13) " 'I will give into your hands the people' " *(Exod. 23:31b, NIV)*.

God also plainly states what His people need to do in response so that they may experience this divine blessing to its fullest: (1) **"Pay attention" and "listen"** *(Exod. 23:21, NIV)* to my Angel (this is the Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Messenger, Jesus Christ *(see Gen. 16:7; Exod. 3:2, 4, 7; Exod. 14:19)*; (2) "Do not rebel against him" *(Exod. 23:21, NIV)*; (3) "Do not bow down before their [the pagans'] gods or worship them or follow their practices" *(Exod. 23:24, NIV)*; (4) "You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces" *(Exod. 23:24, NIV)*; (5) "Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods" *(Exod. 23:32, NIV)*; (6) "Do not let them live in your land" for "they will cause you to sin against me" because their idolatrous worship "will certainly be a snare to you" *(Exod. 23:33, NIV)*.

Thus, **The Lord emphatically warns them not to enter into a covenant relationship with neighboring nations or follow their idolatrous practices by worshiping their gods. Such relationships and practices will disassociate the Israelites from their relationship with the living God, their Creator and Redeemer, causing their ruin.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 122.†‡Ω§

13. ***Incredible as it might seem, the Israelites became accustomed to fighting, and they ended up with pride in their accomplishments! They wanted the nations around them to look up to them as a conquering power and not just to respect their God who was able to give them the land. Thus, they chose to fight because they wanted the honor instead of letting the honor go to God! What do we do that is similar?***

[BSG:] **It was not God's intention for the Israelites to fight for their new territory; it was to be given to them.** It had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and should have been received as God's special gift to Israel.

The model for the conquest of the Promised Land was demonstrated during the crossing of the Red Sea. God fought for His people and gave them total victory over those planning to kill them *(Exod. 14:13, 14)*. The Egyptians were defeated because the Lord miraculously intervened. Similarly, in the time of the Assyrian king Sennacherib, God also defeated the vast, heavily equipped, and well-trained Assyrian army, but without the Israelites having to fight. God granted victory because King Hezekiah believed God's word given to him through the prophet Isaiah *(2 Kings 19:35, Isa. 37:36)*.—*Adult Sabbath School*

*Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 26.†‡§

**Exodus 14:13-14**: [13] Moses answered, "Don't be afraid! Stand your ground, and you will see what the Lord will do to save you today; you will never see these Egyptians again. [14]The Lord will fight for you, and there is no need for you to do anything."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

**2 Kings 19:35**: That night an angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. At dawn the next day, there they lay, all dead!—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

**Isaiah 37:36**: An angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. At dawn the next day there they lay, all dead!—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] God informed Abraham that the Promised Land would not be immediately given to his posterity, but only after 400 years *(Gen. 15:13–16)*. Why? The reason was related to the wickedness of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan. **God was mercifully working with those people and gave them another period of grace to repent. However, they continued in their rebellion against God and His values,** so when the iniquity of those nations was complete, God was ready to give their territory to the Hebrews as a new homeland.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday.†‡§

[BSG:] The crucial role in the conquest of the Promised Land is played by the Angel of God. This Messenger was Christ, who guided Israel, conquered territories, and protected them. He was the pillar of cloud guiding them during the day and the pillar of fire during the night. Israel had to pay careful attention and listen to Him because He had divine authority *(Exod. 23:21)*. Defiance of God's will and unbelief in His leadership would complicate their advancement.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday.‡§

[BSG:] What does this idea, that of God giving those pagans many years to change their ways, teach us about God's grace and also about the limits of that grace for those who refuse to accept it?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 26.‡

14. Unfortunately, God with His foreknowledge was already aware of what was going to happen in the future.

**2 Chronicles 33:9**: Manasseh led the people of Judah to commit even greater sins than those committed by the nations whom the Lord had driven out of the land as his people advanced.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

## Retaliation Laws

15. Many Christians are aware of Matthew 5:38-40 and the discussion about "An eye for an eye." It has often been used to suggest that God is very cruel and harsh and vindictive. But, what did it mean to the original people to whom the direction was given? God gave that law to keep a family from escalating the retaliation for an offense against their family member.
16. Note first that this "eye for an eye" had been the law of several major nations before the days of Moses. It was generally considered to be justice.
17. Read Matthew 5:38-48. How did Jesus interpret the meaning of the retaliation law? How should we apply it today?

**Matthew 5:38-48**: [38] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' [39]But now I tell you: do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. [40]And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. [41]And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one kilometer, carry it two kilometers. [42]When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him.

[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' [44]But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45]so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. [46]Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! [47]And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that! [48]You must be perfect—just as your Father in heaven is perfect!"—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

18. Read the Law of Retaliation in Exodus 21:23–25.

[BSG:] The so-called *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation) is often misunderstood and used to discredit God's character and the teachings of the Old Testament in an attempt to "prove" that the God of the Old Testament is a vengeful God. This notion is far from the truth and understanding of the meaning and intention of this law. **The purpose was to limit personal retaliation or revenge, thereby deterring an individual or family from taking justice into their own hands.** It was a humane law intended for judges dealing with different cases when injuries or harm had occurred. The law was to ensure the application of appropriate (not exaggerated) compensation. Financial recompense was primarily behind these regulations *(see, for example, Exod. 21:19, 22, 30, 32, 34–36)* or offers of freedom from slavery *(Exod. 21:26, 27)*, so that the Israelite community would be protected and evil would be restricted.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 121.†‡§

[BSG:] In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ cited texts from the Old Testament, texts that people were surely familiar with. However, **He was speaking against the current rabbinical interpretations, which over the centuries had moved away from the original purpose of these laws**. That is, human tradition not only hid the purpose of God's Word but in some cases (think of the Sabbath regulations and what they had done to the Sabbath commandment) had perverted their intent and meanings. By His words, Jesus was restoring the original meanings of these laws.

On the Mount of Beatitudes, by pointing His hearers back to the texts' original intent and meaning, Jesus was seeking to correct some of these false interpretations.

The text from Exodus 21:24 that talks about an "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" was quoted in Matthew 5:38 ("you have heard . . . but I say to you") and referred to the *lex talionis*, the so-called retaliation law. This verse is also used in other places in the Bible *(Lev. 24:20, Deut. 19:21)*.

The original intention of this law was formulated against any personal revenge. It was to stop blood feuds, or retaliation without an investigation first. Injury had to be evaluated by judges, and then a proper monetary compensation would be established and paid. **This practice was done in order to stop people from "taking the law into their own hands.**" Justice was to be done, but it had to be done according to God's law.

Jesus Christ, who gave these social laws to Moses, knew the purpose of this law; therefore, He could apply it in an objective way, according to its original intention. The motive behind it was to bring justice and reconciliation, and to restore peace.

One could argue that, in a sense, justice implies a kind of vengeance. The proper application of these laws was, it seemed**, an attempt to find the right balance between the ideas of justice and vengeance.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, August 27.†‡§

## Vengeance

19. How do you understand the following passages?

**Romans 12:19**: Never take revenge, my friends, but instead let God's anger do it. For the scripture says, "I will take revenge, I will pay back, says the Lord."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

**Deuteronomy 32:35**: The Lord will take revenge and punish them;
the time will come when they will fall;
the day of their doom is near.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

20. We must never engage in violence even if someone does us wrong; we must let God deal with them.

[BSG:] Until the Lord brings the justice so lacking now, it was the duty of the judges in ancient Israel to implement the law and to determine a just punishment when harm or injury occurred. But they needed the facts first. The problem was that the teachers of the law in Christ's time applied this law in a way that opened the door for personal vengeance. By doing so**,** the principle was taken out of its context, and the initial purpose was missed. Consequently, they were defending what the law actually forbade. Read Matthew 6:4, 6; Matthew 16:27; Luke 6:23; and 2 Timothy 4:8. What do these texts tell us about how Jesus viewed the principles of reward and punishment?—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, August 28.‡

**Matthew 6:4-6**: 4 "Then it will be a private matter. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you.

5 "When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you, they have already been paid in full. 6But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you."—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

**2 Timothy 4:8**: And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that Day—and not

only to me, but to all those who wait with love for him to appear.—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

[BSG:] Jesus was not against the principle of reward and punishment. Justice is a matter of principle; it is a crucial part of life. **However, no individual is to take the role of judge, jury, and "executioner" upon himself or herself**. How easy it would be for us to pervert justice! It is not up to us to repay harm. If some evil is to be addressed, this must be performed by an objective court; it is the work of judges.

In this context Jesus tells us to be as perfect as our "Father in heaven is perfect." How can we be as perfect as God Himself? Unselfish love is the overarching characteristic of God. He teaches His followers how to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them. True perfection is to love, to be forgiving, and to be merciful *(Luke 6:36)*, even to those who do not deserve it. This principle, and the actions it leads to, is what it means to reflect God's character.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday.†‡§

[BSG:] Because we live in the territory of our enemy, it is no wonder we may be hurt in real life by his skillful and deceptive schemes. Who among us has not known pain and suffering, all brought about because of sin and the sinful fallen world in which we live? It's just part of life now, unfortunately. However, God gives us power to cope.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, August 29.‡

[EGW:] The precious Saviour [*sic*] will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 633.1.‡ [https://egwwritings.org/read?panels=p132.2861&index=0]‡

21. Do you think it was fair to the pagans in the land of Canaan, including the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, to be wiped out? Do not forget what Jesus said about Sodom and Gomorrah while speaking to the people of His home city!

    **Matthew 11:24**: "You can be sure that on the Judgement Day God will show more mercy to Sodom than to you!"—*Good News Bible-TEV*.*

22. How do you think the children of Israel camped at the foot of Mount Sinai would have accepted the idea that we should love our enemies?

23. Do you see a distinct difference between justice and vengeance?

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