DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 24

**If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, 2 and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3 and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, 4 then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. 5 If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married. 6 Do not take a pair of millstones—not even the upper one—as security for a debt, because that would be taking a man’s livelihood as security. 7 If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you. 8 In cases of leprous diseases be very careful to do exactly as the priests, who are Levites, instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them. 9 Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt. 10 When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. 11 Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. 12 If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your possession. 13 Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it. Then he will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the Lord your God. 14 Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. 15 Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin. 16 Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin. 17 Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. 18 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. 19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. 21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. 22 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.**

**24:1–4** In the books of Moses divorce was permitted and regulated (see Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13; Nu 30:9). Jesus conditioned the law of 24:1 in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:31–32) and cited the higher law of creation (Mt 19:3–9). (CSB)

**24:1** *some indecency*. Lit, “nakedness”; suggests indecent exposure, not adultery, for that would be punished by death. Luther condemned this perversion: “If one took a fancy to another’s wife, he might declare any reason both to dismiss his own wife and to estrange his neighbor’s wife from him, so that he might get her in a way that appeared right. That was not considered a sin or a disgrace among them” (LC I 295). (TLSB)

*writes*. Israel’s leadership was likely literate, but the general population probably was not. (TLSB)

**24:4** The Law prevents frivolous divorces, since the wife could not return to her first husband. (TLSB)

*abomination*. All forms of sexual impurity are disgusting to the Lord. (TLSB)

**24:1–4** Jesus explained that Moses only allowed laws about divorce because of “hardness of heart” (Mt 19:8). Israel’s hardness of heart made it necessary for Moses to give divorce laws despite all the laws about family and morality that the Lord had already given through Moses. Yet, in all circumstances, the Lord does not simply tolerate sin but calls people to repent and to have their hearts changed by His Word of grace. • Lord, teach us to pray with David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps 51:10). Amen. (TLSB)

**24:5** *happiness.* Marital bliss was held in high regard. (CSB)

Establishment of a stable family is given priority above civic responsibilities. (TLSB)

**24:6** *millstones.* Used for grinding grain for flour and daily food (see note on Jdg 9:53). (CSB)

Women usually ground meal with a mill and baked bread each day. Taking a family’s mill would threaten people’s lives. (TLSB)

*pledge*. Security for a loan that a lender demanded of the borrower (cf vv 10–13, 17). (TLSB)

**24:7** *as a slave.* Cf. 23:15. (CSB)

*You must purge the evil from among you.* See note on 13:5. (CSB)

Kidnapping for the purpose of selling someone into slavery was widespread in the ancient Near East. (TLSB)

**24:8** *leprous diseases.* See NIV text note; see also note on Lev 13:2. (CSB)

*As I commanded*. Hus: “He who commands ought only to command things in agreement with the law, and the person obeying ought to the same extent to obey them and never act contrary to the will of God Almighty” (*The Church*, p 194). (TLSB)

**24:9, 18, 22** *Remember.* See note on 4:10. (CSB)

**24:10–13** See note on Ex 22:26–27. (CSB)

**24:10–11** Shows consideration for someone forced to borrow. The borrower has the right to select what pledge he chooses to give, not the lender. (TLSB)

**24:12–13** Should a poor person offer his cloak as security for a loan, the lender was required to return it by nightfall. (TLSB)

*righteousness for you*. Chemnitz: “To give a pledge back to the poor is certainly a good and righteous work, and yet it is not such a work that—if measured by the rigorous standard of the Law—would merit the title of ‘righteousness.’ … Hence, because the person has already been justified, the term ‘righteousness’ has already been assigned to him” (*LTh* 2:646). (TLSB)

**24:16** *each is to die for his own sin.* See Eze 18:4 and note. (CSB)

Cypr: “Every one is himself held fast in his own sin; nor can one become guilty for another” (*ANF* 5:334). (TLSB)

**24:17–18** When the Israelites were in trouble, the Lord helped them. Therefore they were not to take advantage of others in difficulty. (CSB)

**24:18** *remember*. Motivation for showing justice and love to the unfortunate (cf v 22). (TLSB)

**24:19–21** See note on Lev 19:9–10. (CSB)

**24:19–22** Unripe or overlooked grain, olives, and grapes were to be left behind to show compassion for those who were allowed to glean for food (cf Ru 2:1–7). Care for the poor still required the poor to work. (TLSB)