

Genesis 9:1-7

Noah and the Sanctity of Life

Genesis 9 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ²The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. ³Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as *I gave* the green plant. ⁴Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood. ⁵Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from *every* man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

⁶“Whoever sheds man’s blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.

⁷“As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

Matthew Henry on Genesis 9 (Edited)

Both the world and the (people of God) were now again reduced to a family, the family of Noah, of the affairs of which this chapter gives us an account...from this family we are all descendants.

1. ***God promises them to take care of their lives***, so that, (1) They should replenish the earth, ver 1, 7.

Genesis 9:1,7 are “bookends”...

Genesis 9:1,7 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth....“As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

(2) They should be safe from the threats of the animals, which should stand in awe of them, ver 2. (3) They should be allowed to eat flesh for the support of their lives; only they must not eat blood, ver 3, 4. (4) The world should never be drowned again, ver 8-11.

2. ***God requires of them to take care of one another's lives, and of their own, ver 5, 6.***

Genesis 9:1-7

Here in Genesis 9:1ff we have the Magna Carta—the great charter of this new kingdom of nature which was now to be erected, and incorporated, the former charter having been forfeited and seized.

I. *The grants of this charter are kind and gracious to men.* Here is,

1. **A grant of lands of vast extent, and a promise of a great increase of men to occupy and enjoy them. The first blessing is here renewed: Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth (v. 1), and repeated (v. 7), for the race of mankind was, as it were, to begin again.**

Now, (1) God sets the whole earth before them, tells them it is all their own, while it remains, to them and their heirs.

Genesis 9:1,7...**fill the earth...**“As for you, be fruitful and multiply; **Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it**

Note...The earth God has given to the children of men, for a possession and habitation, Ps 115 16.

Psalm 115 ¹⁶The heavens are the heavens of the Lord,
But the earth He has given to the sons of men.

Though it is not a paradise, but a wilderness rather; yet it is better than we deserve. Blessed be God, it is not hell.

(2) He gives them a blessing, by the force and virtue of which mankind should be both multiplied and perpetuated upon earth, so that in a little time all the habitable parts of the earth should be more or less inhabited; and, though one generation should pass away, yet another generation should come, while the world stands, so that the stream of the human race should be supplied with a constant succession, and run parallel with the current of time, till both should be delivered up together into the ocean of eternity. ***Though death should still reign, and the Lord would still be known by his judgments, yet the earth should never again be “dispeopled” as now it was, but still replenished (cf Acts 17 24-26).***

Acts 17 ²⁴The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

²⁶ and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation

2. A grant of power over the inferior creatures, v. 2.

He grants, (1) A title to them: Into your hands they are delivered, for your use and benefit. (2) A dominion over them, without which the title would avail little: The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast.

This revives a former grant (ch. 1 28), only with this difference, that man in innocence ruled by love, fallen man rules by fear.

Genesis 1 ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Now this grant remains in force, and thus far we have still the benefit of it,

[1.] That ***those creatures which are any way useful to us are reclaimed, and we use them either for service or food, or both, as they are capable.*** The horse and ox patiently submit to the bridle and yoke, and the sheep is dumb both before the shearer and before the butcher; for the fear and dread of man are upon them.

[2.] ***Those creatures that are any way hurtful to us are restrained, so that, though now and then man may be hurt by some of them, they do not combine together to rise up in rebellion against man, else God could by these destroy the world as effectually as he did by a deluge;***

It is one of God's stern judgments, Ezek 14 21.

Ezekiel 14 ²¹ For thus says the Lord God, “How much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it!

What is it that keeps wolves out of our towns, and lions out of our streets, and confines them to the wilderness, but this fear and dread?

Now, some have been tamed, Jas 3 7.

James 3 ⁷ For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race

3. A grant of maintenance and subsistence: Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, v. 3. *Previously, most think, man had been confined to feed only upon the products of the earth...*fruits, herbs, and roots, and all sorts of corn and milk; so was the first grant, ch. 1 29.

Genesis 1 ²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; ³⁰ and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given every green plant for food*"; and it was so.

But the flood having perhaps washed away much of the virtue of the earth, and so rendered its fruits less pleasing and less nourishing, ***God now enlarged the grant, and allowed man to eat flesh***, which perhaps man himself never thought of, till now that God directed him to it, nor had any such desire... But now man is allowed to feed upon flesh, as freely and safely as upon the green herb.

Constable notes...God gave Noah permission to eat animals (Genesis 9:3). Until now, evidently people had eaten only plants (cf. Genesis 1:29). Now humanity received the power of life and death over the animal kingdom.

"God did not expressly prohibit the eating of meat in the initial stipulation at creation, but by inference Genesis 9:3's provision for flesh is used as a dividing mark between the antediluvian and postdiluvian periods. Whether or not early man could eat meat by permission from the beginning, now it is stated formally in the Noahic covenant."

God did, however, prohibit the eating of animal blood to instill respect for the sacredness of life, since blood is a symbol of life (cf. Leviticus 3:17; Leviticus 7:2-27; Leviticus 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:1-24; 1 Samuel 14:32-34).

Now here see, (1.) That God is a good master, and provides, not only that we may live, but that we may live comfortably, in his service; not for necessity only, but for delight. (2.) That every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, 1 Tim 4 4.

1 Timothy 4 ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude;

Afterwards some meats that were proper enough for food were prohibited by the ceremonial law; but from the beginning, it seems, it was not so...

II. The precepts and provisos of this character are no less kind and gracious, and instances of God's good-will to man. The precepts here given all concern the life of man.

1. **"Flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat..."**

God would hereby show,

(1) That though they were lords of the creatures, yet they were subjects to the Creator, and under the restraints of his law.

(2) That they must not be barbarous and cruel to the inferior creatures. They must be lords, but not tyrants; they might kill them for their profit, but not torment them for their pleasure...

(3) That during the continuance of the law of sacrifices, in which the blood made atonement for the soul (Lev 17 11), signifying that the life of the sacrifice was accepted for the life of the sinner, blood must not be looked upon as a common thing, but must be poured out before the Lord (2 Sam 23 16), either upon his altar or upon his earth.

Leviticus 17 ¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'

2. Man must not take away his own life: Your blood of your lives will I require, v. 5. Our lives are not so our own as that we may quit them at our own pleasure, but they are God's and we must resign them at his pleasure; if we in any way hasten our own deaths, we are accountable to God for it.

3. The beasts must not be suffered to hurt the life of man: At the hand of every beast will I require it.

To show how tender God was of the life of man, though he had lately made such destruction of lives, he will have the beast put to death that kills a man. This was confirmed by the law of Moses (Exod 21 28), and I think it would not be unsafe to observe it still. ***Thus God showed his hatred of the sin of murder, that men might hate it the more, and not only punish, but prevent it.***

Exodus 21 ²⁸ "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall go unpunished.

4. Wilful murderers must be put to death.

Constable notes...God not only reasserted the cultural mandate to reproduce and modified the food law, but He also reasserted the sanctity of human life (cf. ch. 4). The reason for capital punishment (Genesis 9:6) is that God made man in His own image. This is one reason, therefore, that murder is so serious. A person extinguishes a revelation of God when he or she murders someone....Later the writing prophets announced that God would judge certain foreign nations because they shed human blood without divine authorization (e.g., Amos 1:3; Amos 1:11; Amos 1:13; Amos 2:1). ***God has never countermanded this command, so it is still in force. Before the Flood the lack of capital punishment led to bloody vendettas (cf. ch. 4).***

"This command laid the foundation for all civil government." Keil and Delitzsch

"The human government and the governors that existed previously-as in the city which Cain established (Genesis 4:17), or in the case of the mighty men (Genesis 6:4)-existed solely on human authority. Now, however, divine authority was conferred on human government to exercise oversight over those who lived under its jurisdiction."

This is the sin which is here designed to be restrained by the terror of punishment

(1) God will punish murderers: At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man, that is, "I will avenge the blood of the murdered upon the murderer." 2 Chron 24 22.

2 Chronicles 24 ²² Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which his father Jehoiada had shown him, but he murdered his son. And as he died he said, "May the Lord see and avenge!"

When God requires the life of a man at the hand of him that took it away unjustly, the murderer cannot render that, and therefore must render his own in lieu of it, which is the only way left of making restitution.

Note, The righteous God will certainly make inquisition for blood, though men cannot or do not.

(2) The magistrate must punish murderers (v. 6): Whoso sheddeth man's blood, whether upon a sudden provocation or having premeditated it (for rash anger is heart-murder as well as malice prepense, Matt 5 21, 22), by man shall his blood be shed, that is, by the magistrate, or whoever is appointed or allowed to be the avenger of blood.

There are those who are ministers of God for this purpose, to be a protection to the innocent, by being a terror to the malicious and evildoers, and they must not bear the sword in vain, Rom 13 4.

Romans 13 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. ² Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. ³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

Before the flood, as it should seem by the story of Cain, God took the punishment of murder into his own hands; but now he committed this judgment to men, to masters of families at first, and afterwards to the heads of countries, who ought to be faithful to the trust reposed in them.

Note, Wilful murder ought always to be punished with death. It is a sin which the Lord would not pardon in a prince (2 Kings 24 3, 4), and which therefore a prince should not pardon in a subject.

2 Kings 24 ³ Surely at the command of the Lord it came upon Judah, to remove *them* from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, ⁴ and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the Lord would not forgive.

To this law there is a reason annexed: For in the image of God made he man at first. Man is a creature dear to his Creator, and therefore ought to be so to us. God put honour upon him, let not us then put contempt upon him.

Such remains of God's image are still even upon fallen man as that he who unjustly kills a man defaces the image of God and does dishonour to him.

When God allowed men to kill their beasts, yet he forbade them to kill their slaves; for these are of a much more noble and excellent nature, not only God's creatures, but his image...

Genesis 9 ⁵ Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from *every* man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

⁶ "Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,
For in the image of God
He made man.

Genesis 1 ²⁶ Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

God's Moral Law...

Westminster Larger Catechism

Q. 93. What is the moral law?

A. The moral law is the declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect, and perpetual conformity and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man: promising life upon the fulfilling, and threatening death upon the breach of it.

Deut. 5:1-3, 31, 33; Luke 10:26-27; Gal. 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:23; Luke 1:75; Acts 24:16; Rom. 10:5; Gal. 3:10, 12.

Q. 94. Is there any use of the moral law to man since the fall?

A. Although no man, since the fall, can attain to righteousness and life by the moral law; yet there is great use thereof, as well common to all men, as peculiar either to the unregenerate, or the regenerate.

Rom. 8:3; Gal. 2:16; 1 Tim. 1:8.

Q. 95. Of what use is the moral law to all men?

A. The moral law is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly; to convince them of their disability to keep it, and of the sinful pollution of their nature, hearts, and lives; to humble them in the sense of their sin and misery, and thereby help them to a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and of the perfection of his obedience.

Lev. 11:44-45; Lev. 20:7-8; Rom. 7:12; Mic. 6:8; Jas. 2:10-11; Ps. 19:11-12; Rom. 3:20; Rom. 7:7; Rom. 3:9, 23; Gal. 3:21-22; Rom. 10:4.

Q. 96. What particular use is there of the moral law to unregenerate men?

A. The moral law is of use to unregenerate men, to awaken their consciences to flee from wrath to come, and to drive them to Christ; or, upon their continuance in the estate and way of sin, to leave them inexcusable, and under the curse thereof.

1 Tim. 1:9-10; Gal. 3:24; Rom. 1:20; Rom. 2:15; Gal. 3:10.

Q. 97. What special use is there of the moral law to the regenerate?

A. Although they that are regenerate, and believe in Christ, be delivered from the moral law as a covenant of works, so as thereby they are neither justified nor condemned: yet, beside the general uses thereof common to them with all men, it is of special use to show them how much they are bound to Christ for his fulfilling it, and enduring the curse thereof in their stead and for their good; and thereby to provoke them to more thankfulness, and to express the same in their greater care to conform themselves thereunto as the rule of their obedience.

Rom. 6:14; Rom. 7:4, 6; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:20; Gal. 5:23; Rom. 8:1; Rom. 7:24-25; Gal. 3:13-14; Rom. 8:3-4; Luke 1:68-69, 74-75; Col. 1:12-14; Rom. 7:22; Rom. 12:2; Titus 2:11-14.

Q. 134. Which is the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.

Ex. 20:13.

Q. 135. What are the duties required in the sixth commandment?

A. The duties required in the sixth commandment are, all careful studies, and lawful endeavours, to preserve the life of ourselves and others by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices, which tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defence thereof against violence, patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreation; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness; peaceable, mild, and courteous speeches and behavior: forbearance, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and requiting good for evil; comforting and succoring the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Eph. 5:28-29; 1 Kings 18:4; Jer. 26:15-16; Acts 23:12, 16-17, 21, 27; Eph. 4:26-27; 2 Sam. 2:22; Deut. 22:8; Matt. 4:6-7; Prov. 1:10-11, 15-16; 1 Sam. 24:12; 1 Sam. 26:9-11; Gen. 37:21-22; Ps. 82:4; Prov. 24:11-12; 1 Sam. 14:45; Jas. 5:7-11; Heb. 12:9; 1 Thess. 4:11; 1 Pet. 3:3-4; Ps. 37:8-11; Prov. 17:22; Prov. 25:16, 27; 1 Tim. 5:23; Isa. 38:21; Ps. 127:2; Ecc. 5:12; 2 Thess. 3:10, 12; Prov. 16:26; Ecc. 3:4, 11; 1 Sam. 19:4-5; 1 Sam. 22:13-14; Rom. 13:10; Luke 10:33-34; Col. 3:12-13; Jas. 3:17; 1 Pet. 3:8-11; Prov. 15:1; Judg. 8:1-3; Matt. 5:24; Eph. 4:2, 32; Rom. 12:17, 20-21; 1 Thess. 5:14; Job 31:19-20; Matt. 25:35-36; Prov. 31:8-9.

Q. 136. What are the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the sixth commandment are, all taking away the life of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire of revenge; all excessive passions, distracting cares; immoderate use of meat, drink, labor, and recreations; provoking words; oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatsoever else tends to the destruction of the life of any.

Acts 16:28; Gen. 9:6; Num. 35:31, 33; Jer. 48:10; Deut. 20:1-20; Ex. 22:2-3; Matt. 25:42-43; Jas. 2:15-16; Ecc. 6:1-2; Matt. 5:22; 1 John 3:15; Lev. 19:17; Prov. 14:30; Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:31; Matt. 6:31, 34; Luke 21:34; Rom. 13:13; Ecc. 12:12; Ecc. 2:22-23; Isa. 5:12; Prov. 15:1; Prov. 12:18; Ezek. 18:18; Ex. 1:14; Gal. 5:15; Prov. 23:29; Num. 35:16-18, 21; Ex. 21:18-36.

Why Is Abortion Wrong?

Randy Alcorn

Some “pro-choice” advocates claim to base their beliefs on the Bible. They maintain that Scripture does not prohibit abortion. They are wrong. ***The Bible does, in fact, emphatically prohibit the killing of innocent people (Ex. 20:13) and clearly considers the unborn to be human beings worthy of protection (Ex. 21:22–25).***

Job graphically described the way God created him before he was born (Job 10:8–12). That which was in his mother’s womb was not some thing that might become Job, but someone who was Job—the same man, only younger. To the prophet Isaiah, God says, “Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you” (Isa. 44:2). What each person is, not merely what he might become, was present in his mother’s womb.

Psalms 139:13–16 paints a vivid picture of God’s intimate involvement with a preborn person. God created David’s “inward parts” not at birth, but before birth. David says to his Creator, “You knitted me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps. 139:13). Each person, regardless of his parentage or handicap, has not been manufactured on a cosmic assembly line, but personally formed by God. All the days of his life are planned out by God before any come to be (v. 16).

Meredith Kline observes:

The most significant thing about abortion legislation in Biblical law is that there is none. It was so unthinkable that an Israelite woman should desire an abortion that there was no need to mention this offense in the criminal code.

All that was necessary to prohibit an abortion was the command, “You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13). Every Israelite knew that the preborn child was a child. So do we, if we are honest. We all know a pregnant woman is “carrying a child.”

Every child in the womb is God’s handiwork and part of God’s plan. Christ loves that child and proved it by becoming like him—He spent nine months in His mother’s womb.

Like toddler and adolescent, the terms embryo and fetus do not refer to nonhumans but to humans at various stages of development. It is scientifically inaccurate to say a human embryo or a fetus is not a human being simply because he is at an earlier stage than an infant. This is like saying that a toddler is not a human being because he is not yet an adolescent. Does someone become more human as he gets bigger? If so, then adults are more human than children, and football players are more human than jockeys. Something nonhuman does not become human or more human by getting older or bigger; whatever is human is human from the beginning, or it can never be human at all. ***The right to live does not increase with age and size; otherwise, toddlers and adolescents have less right to live than adults.***

Once we acknowledge that the unborn are human beings, the question of their right to live should be settled, regardless of how they were conceived. The comparison between babies’ rights and mothers’ rights is unequal. What is at stake in the vast majority of abortions is the mother’s lifestyle, as opposed to the baby’s life. In such cases, it is reasonable for society to expect an adult to live temporarily with an inconvenience if the only alternative is killing a child.

Pro-choice advocates divert attention from the vast majority of abortions (99 percent) by focusing on rape and incest because of the sympathy factor. They give the false impression that pregnancies are common in such cases. However, no child is a despicable “product of rape or incest” but God’s unique and wonderful image-bearing creation. Having and holding a child can do much more good for a victimized woman than the knowledge that a child died in an attempt to reduce her trauma.

Every child in the womb is God's handiwork and part of God's plan.

When Alan Keyes addressed middle school students at a school in Detroit, a thirteen-year-old girl asked if he would make an exception for rape in his pro-life position. He responded with this question:

If your dad goes out and rapes somebody, and we convict him of that rape, do you think it would be right for us to then say, "OK, because your dad is guilty of that rape, we're going to kill you?"

The class answered "No." When asked why a girl should have to go through a pregnancy when something so awful happened to her, he wisely answered with this analogy:

Let's say that when you are 19, America gets involved in a war. And, when we've gotten involved in wars in the past, we had a draft and the people your age would be drafted, and they'd be sent off to war, right? You are going to have to go off. You are going to have to live on a battlefield. You are going to have to risk your life. And many people did in fact risk their lives, lived in hardship every single day and finally died. Why? Because they were defending what? Our country and defending its freedom. They had to go through hardship, didn't they, for the sake of freedom.

The principle of freedom is that our rights come from God. Do you think it's wrong to ask people to make sacrifices to keep our respect for that principle? . . . But I don't believe it is right to take that pain and actually make it worse . . . do you know what I'm adding if I let you have an abortion? I'm adding the burden of that abortion. And at some point, the truth of God that is written on your heart comes back to you. And you're wounded by that truth.

So I don't think it's fair, not to the child and not to the woman, to let this tragedy claim both their lives; the physical life of the child and the moral and spiritual life of the mother. And I think in this society we do both terrible harm because we don't have the courage to stand by what is true. (ProLife Info Digest, Feb. 2, 2000)

In their book, Victims and Victors, David Reardon and associates draw on the accounts of 192 women who experienced pregnancy as the result of rape or incest. It turns out that when victims of violence speak for themselves, their opinion of abortion is nearly unanimous and the exact opposite of what most would predict: nearly all the women interviewed said they regretted aborting their babies conceived via rape or incest.

Of those giving an opinion, more than 90 percent said they would discourage other victims of sexual violence from having abortions. Not one who gave birth to a child expressed regret.

Imposing capital punishment on the innocent child of a sex offender does nothing bad to the rapist and nothing good to the woman.

Creating a second victim never undoes the damage to the first. Abortion does not bring healing to a rape victim.

Christ's disciples failed to understand how valuable children were to Him, so they rebuked those who tried to bring them near Him (Luke 18:15–17). But Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” He considered attention to children to be part of His kingdom business, not a distraction.

The biblical view of children is that they are a blessing and a gift from the Lord (Ps. 127:3–5). However, Western culture increasingly treats children as liabilities. We must learn to see all children as God does, and we must act toward them as He commands us to act. We must defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed; rescue the weak and needy; and deliver them from the wicked (Ps. 82:3–4).

Christ stated that whatever we do or do not do for God's weakest and most vulnerable children, we do it or do not do it to Him. At the judgment, “The King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40).

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/abortion>

J G Vos on the Sanctity of Life and Capital Punishment

“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (9:1). This command of God to Noah and his sons parallels the mandate given to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. It is a blessing, accompanied by a command to fill the earth with people.

This mandate to fill the earth with people was accompanied by certain divine ordinances pertaining to the protection of human life and the sustenance of human life. These ordinances were necessary for the carrying out of the program of redemption through the course of history. We must bear in mind that the human race at this time had been reduced to eight people. In a real sense, the human race was beginning over again with Noah and his family.

The command to be fruitful and multiply was especially important, as shown by the fact that, after being stated in 9:1, it is repeated with emphasis in 9:7. Next, our attention is called to the fact that man's life was to be protected from destruction by animals. "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered" (9:2). To this is added the statement, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it" (9:5).

At the Creation (1:26-28), man was made supreme over the animals, but at that time the creatures were willingly submissive to man... But during the time of sin, it is necessary that human life be protected by making the animals afraid of man. Moreover, God promised to avenge man when devouring animals destroy his life....

Along with the statement that the animals were to be afraid of man, permission was granted to man to eat animals for food. This permission is granted, however, with a restriction: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat" (9:4).

This being coupled with the promise of vengeance from animals reveals the point of view. ***Since the animals are not to devour man after a carnivorous fashion, man also is not to eat the animals as wild beasts devour their living prey. He must show proper reverence for life as a sacred thing, of which God alone has the disposal, and for the use of which man is dependent on the permission of God*** (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, pp. 64- 65).

Not only must man's life be protected from destruction by the animals; it must also be protected from destruction by his fellow man. We should recall, as the background of this divine command, the conditions that existed in human society just before the Flood. The earth was filled with violence; crime existed everywhere. Now that humanity was making a new start, God expressly and with strong emphasis forbade murder. Moreover, God specified the punishment for murder: namely, the death penalty. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (9:6).

At this point, we should note that death as the penalty for murder was required by divine commandment. Those who, in our own day, oppose the death penalty for murder often forget this and regard the death penalty as a mere human law.

It is astonishing how many Christian people, who profess to believe in the Bible as the infallible Word of God, dare to say that they are opposed to the death penalty as the punishment for murder. They seem to forget that ***this is not just a human law or custom, but has the command of God behind it. The nation or state that abolishes the death penalty for murder is itself sinning against God and may expect His judgment in some form.***

Modern arguments against the death penalty for murder are almost always based on one or more of three mistakes:

(1) They may be based on mere sentiment, a mere shrinking from the idea of the state putting an end to an individual's life in this world.

(2) They may be based on a false notion of law and justice, asserting that the only purpose of punishment is the reform of the offender. Obviously, a murderer cannot be reformed by putting him to death.

(3) Or, they may be based on the false notion that the teachings of Christ or the Sermon on the Mount have repealed this divine law given at the time of Noah.

It is not true that the only purpose of punishment is the reformation of the offender. Nor is the purpose of punishment merely to make an impression on other people, so as to warn them against committing murder. ***The true purpose of punishment is justice; it is a manifestation of God's attribute of retributive righteousness, by which sin and suffering are inseparably linked. A murderer is executed, not merely to warn other people against committing murder, but because it is right that he be executed. The character of God demands it.***

Nor is it true that the teachings of Christ or the Sermon on the Mount have repealed the law of capital punishment given in the days of Noah. Many people make sweeping statements of this kind, by which they attempt to get rid of anything in the Old Testament that does not please them. Jesus teaches, rather, that in addition to all penalties for sin suffered in this life, there remains the eternal punishment of sin in hell (Matt. 5:21-22).

The record in Genesis assigns as the reason for the death penalty in the case of murder, "for in the image of God made he man" (9:6). Man is not just another kind of animal; unlike all the animals, man was created in the image of God. He bears the image of his Creator. Therefore, he who destroys the life of man destroys that which bears the image of God. Murder is not only an awful injury to one's fellow man, but also an insult to God. He who murders his fellow man affronts God by destroying God's image-bearer.

The argument so frequently met with, that capital punishment adds but a second murder to the first, is an argument based either on total ignorance of the facts of Scripture or on open denial of the obligatory character of what the Bible teaches. How can that be characterized as a duplicated murder that professes to rest on the most explicit command of God, and over against which men have nothing to put except sentimental objections, and an unproven theory about the meliorating efficacy of forms of discipline which from their very nature exclude the punishment of death? (G. Vos, Biblical Theology, p. 66).

Vos, J.G.. Genesis . Crown & Covenant Publications.