

The Basis of Government – Gen. 9:5-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Lofty Goals*

1. I have some lofty goals for our time together this morning.
2. It's my aim that by the time we're finished we'll have a clear understanding on what God intends human government to be about.
3. This is important ground we're covering, something every one of us ought to be familiar with.
4. I hope when you leave this place today you'll realize with renewed conviction and confidence that the Bible speaks with authority and wisdom to far more than just some quaint, private religious corner of our lives.
5. What we hold in our hands, this Book, is God's Word, inspired and inerrant and the blueprint for all of life, from the governing of our own individual lives to the rule of nations.

B. *Lecture More Than Sermon*

1. To that end, this morning's message is more a *lecture* than a *sermon*.
2. Each of us will be pressed to *think a bit harder* than usual.
3. And it all begins with what we find in Genesis 9:5-6

II. TEXT

A. *Vs. 5-6*

1. In this passage, God is speaking to Noah and his 3 sons.
2. They've been given a fresh start in a new world.
 - a. so God comes and blesses them, giving them guidelines for *how* they're to live in this new environment.
 - b. it's at this point God tells them they're now allowed to add *meat* to their diet.
 - c. but God is careful to warn man that even though he may eat meat, he must show *reverence* for life – even the life of the animals he kills.
3. Building on this principle of respect for life, God then applies it

specifically to the life of man and in v. 5 says-

5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a *reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of 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.

4. The picture the Bible paints for us of the world *before* the flood is one of society run amuck.
 - a. it was filled with violence - demonic activity was abundant - sexual perversion was pervasive.
 - b. ch. 4 tells us of the descendants of Cain, a line which begins and ends with the reputation of brutal murder.
 - c. we're left with the impression that one of the reasons why God brought the flood was because the human race had become much like a dog with rabies.
 - 1) it was out of control and destined to extinction through its own moral disease & corruption.
 - 2) Noah alone was uninfected, and God put down the rabid dog before it could bite and infect the lone survivor of the spiritual plague that was destroying the human race.
 - d. as Noah and his sons now step forth from the ark, God wants to impress upon them the single greatest value, the most important truth regarding how they're to treat one another.
 - e. it's based on the *value*, the *sanctity* of human life.
 - f. they must not think that because God Himself has just wiped out the entire population of earth that HE disregards the value of human life.
 - g. on the contrary, it's precisely BECAUSE of the value of human life that the Flood was necessary.
 - 1) men & women had come to deny that value.
 - 2) the whole race from top to bottom had become a murderous pack of criminals.
 - 3) only Noah escaped the corruption of his time.
 - h. so God now comes to him with words that are meant to enter into his heart and mind and lay the ground for a subsequent

history that will forever enshrine the sanctity of human life as the primary rule for all relationships.

B. The Basis of Human Government

1. Look at these verses again . . .

5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; . . .

2. When a man or woman's blood is spilt and a life is taken, God demands a *reckoning*, an *accounting*.
 - a. there must be an *investigation* to determine the cause.
 - b. and if it's a case of murder – then the guilty party must be punished.

. . . from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man.

3. If an animal has killed a person – that animal must be executed.
4. If another man or woman is to blame, they must be put to death.

From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

5. God is here entrusting the task of pursuing justice into the hands and authority of the murdered person's relatives.

6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed;

6. After giving the specifics in v. 5, God now lays down the principle of *capital punishment*.
 - a. when there's been a murder, it becomes the duty and responsibility of other men to execute the murderer.
 - b. this is nothing less than the original mandate of God for human government.
 - 1) these verses form the core and nexus for our understanding of what God intends in civil government.
 - 2) the reckoning he demands in v. 5 speaks of a *justice system*.
 - 3) and the authority to execute murderers establishes and authorizes a *law enforcement system*.
7. Please take careful note of this – God's mandate for human civil government is based on what principle? The value & sanctity of human life.

8. But this sanctity isn't just snatched out of thin air. It's based on the last words of v. 6 -

For in the image of God He made man.

9. There you have it – The *sanctity*, the *specialness* of human life that frames the basis for all human government is based on the FACT that Man is created in the image of God!

10. And it's precisely at this point that we run into problems in our modern age.

11. But before we get into that, we need to see how what God says here develops and grows through the rest of Scripture.

C. The Development of Capital Punishment

1. Later on in the Law of Moses, God refines and clarifies the basic mandate given here.
2. He gives guidelines for dealing with those who take another's life.
3. As He here says that a *reckoning* must be made, He gives *insights* for that reckoning.
 - a. a distinction between *killing* and *murder* is made.
 - b. not all killing *is* murder.
 - c. there are some cases where there's just cause for killing;
 - 1) self-defense is one,
 - 2) capital punishment with the due process of law, the very thing demanded here, is another,
 - 3) a just war is a case of permissible killing,
 - d. God also called for recognition that some cases of killing are *accidental*.
 - 1) when the Jews entered into the Promise Land at the end of the Exodus, God instructed them to establish *cities of refuge* throughout their territory.
 - 2) these were special places where those who'd *accidentally* killed someone could flee for safety from the hand of the one who came after them to exact revenge.
 - 3) the elders of the city of refuge would sit in judgment, listening to the refugee's side of the story and then to the avenger's evidence.
 - 4) if the elders ruled it was an accident, then the refugee was permitted to remain in the city and live there the rest of his

life

- 5) if they ruled that he was in fact *guilty* of *murder*, then he would be turned over to the avenger who would execute him then and there.
4. The rules God gave for the elders to determine a verdict of guilt in murder were specific and just.
 - a. justice was to be truly blind, showing no favor to those who were rich and powerful nor prejudice against those who were poor and powerless.
 - b. circumstantial evidence alone was not enough to conclude guilt.
 - c. there had to be at least 2 eyewitnesses to the murder and their testimony when questioned had to agree.
 - d. the penalty for perjury in a capital case was death to the lying witness!
 - e. that's how serious this whole issue of capital punishment was in the courts of Israel.
5. Let's look at vs. 5 & 6 again -

5 Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a *reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of 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.

6. It's clear here that God *bases* capital punishment on the *sanctity* of human life.
7. That sanctity isn't just pulled out of thin air; it's flows from the fact that man is created in the image of God.
8. Opponents of capital punishment say that life is so precious, it's wrong to take it even in punishment for murder.
9. But God says, human life is so precious, when one man/woman murders another, the rest of men and women must band together to express and reinforce their commitment to the sanctity of life by removing the one whose denied that sanctity.
10. In other words, the murderer is a threat, not just to the person they've murdered, but to the whole race, because they've attacked the foundation all society and human relations are built on – that

man is created in the image of God.

11. Murder is a spiritual and moral cancer that if not excised will eventually infect and destroy the whole race.
12. Far from being a *denial* of the sanctity of human life, capital punishment is Mankind's way of endorsing and renewing its commitment *to it*.
13. There are many today who believe that the NT and Words of Christ have dispatched the mandate for capital punishment. They say -
 - a. didn't Jesus call us not to return evil for evil?
 - b. didn't He say that if we're slapped on the cheek we ought to turn the other also?
 - c. didn't He in fact let some people go who had committed crimes worthy of death under the OT law?
14. Let's be clear here – Jesus never countermanded the rule or the principle of capital punishment!
 - a. yes, He told His followers not to return evil for evil but instead to do good.
 - b. the command to turn the other cheek has nothing whatsoever to do with capital punishment!
 - c. Jesus was speaking solely in regard to *interpersonal relationships*; He was not giving guidelines for civil government!
 - d. it's important we understand this distinction.
 - 1) Jesus was speaking to and teaching those who follow Him as they relate to one another and the world.
 - 2) He was not giving instructions to public officials in how to execute their roles as the governing authority.
 - e. and yes, Jesus *did* let some people off who had committed crimes worthy of death,
 - 1) but only because the justice system that was seeking to condemn them was corrupt *and the due process of law was not being followed*.
 - 2) the just reckoning God called for was being twisted into a weapon, not to bring justice, but to trap *Jesus* and condemn **HIM**, an *innocent* man!
15. Romans 13:1-7 is the definitive NT passage on this subject and gives us great commentary on the principle and basis of

government first laid out in our text.

- a. the Apostle Paul was a Jewish rabbi who'd sat at the feet of one of Judaism all-time greatest scholars – a man named Gamaliel.
- b. Paul was brilliant in his own right!
 - 1) so, take the training he had from Gamaliel, add his own keen intellect
 - 2) and cap it off with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and you have a towering powerhouse of spiritual insight.
- c. what Paul wrote in Romans 13 is an elaboration and application of what we find here in Genesis 9 –

¹Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ²Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

16. It couldn't be clearer – Civil government is ordained by God.
 - a. its authority, that is its *legal right*, is appointed by Him.
 - b. but authority is useless unless it's backed up with *power*
 - c. so God gives the state the *power of the sword*.
17. Now, the sword isn't used for spanking people; it's not the flat side of the blade the state wields, it's the edge.
18. The sword speaks of capital punishment!
19. This passage makes it clear that the role of civil government is to restrain evil through the threat of force – ultimately, the power to take life!
20. Genesis 9:6 makes it crystal clear that the foundational principle that ought to govern the state's *use of force* is the sanctity

of human life – which is rooted in the reality that man is created in the image of God.

21. And here's where you and I run into a monumental problem.
22. This is the point at which I have to ask you to pay especially close attention because here we enter some deep waters.

D. The Image of God

1. Everyone has a core belief – a central truth that governs all their choices.
2. This is known as a *worldview*.
 - a. if we just observe people, we see what they *do* – their *behavior*.
 - b. if we ask *why* they did what they did, they'll say because in that situation it's what was *best* – this is the level of *values*; they put more value on one choice than another.
 - c. but if we press and ask, why is that choice "*better*" – then they'll reveal a deeper level of *belief*.
 - d. finally, if we ask how they have come to *believe* that, they'll reveal the *core truth*, the single thing upon which all beliefs, values, and behavior are based.
 - e. this is their starting point, their *ultimate reality* – their *worldview*.
3. At this moment in history, there are two worldviews that are in competition with each other: The Christian/Biblical Worldview and the Naturalistic Worldview.
 - a. the Christian worldview says that the Ultimate Reality is the God of the Bible.
 - 1) He is the Origin, Purpose, and Goal of all things.
 - 2) As Creator & Sustainer of the universe, His Word is the basis for all belief, values, and behavior.
 - 3) Since man is created in the image of God, the value of a human life, *any* human life is determined by God, not man!
 - 4) And God has said that we are to place the value of other's lives at the peak of consideration when making our choices.
 - 5) we see all of this reflected in the Greatest commandment –
You shall love the Lord your God with all you heart, soul, mind, and strength, & you shall love your neighbor as yourself!
 - b. set over against the Biblical/Christian worldview is the

Naturalistic/Materialistic Worldview –

- 1) which says that there is no God; all that has ever existed is energy and matter.
 - 2) there is no ultimate purpose or goal to anything – it all just is.
 - 3) humans are nothing more than freak accidents – life is a mindless phenomenon of molecules in ordered motion.
 - 4) since there's no purpose or goal to life, there's no objective right and wrong.
 - 5) therefore people are free to make up their own rules.
 - 6) as they do, if they want to band together and form power groups which enforce their will over others and assign value to some lives while taking it from others, fine!
 - 7) there's no one and nothing that sits in ultimate judgment so people are free to do what is right and convenient in their own eyes.
4. As I describe the Naturalistic/Materialistic worldview I know most of us hear it and agree that this is indeed what many in our culture embrace.
 5. But as Christians, we find it repugnant and scary because of the implications of living it out.
 6. What I want to suggest is that while that may be our reaction when hearing such a worldview *defined*, the fact of the matter is, many Christians live their lives more out of a *naturalist* than *Biblical* worldview!
 - a. when we buy into the “*quality of life*” ethic rather than maintain the “*sanctity of life*” we’re thinking like atheists, not Christians.
 - b. when we accept abortion & euthanasia, we’re coming from a materialistic center that is nothing less than anti-biblical!
 7. Please hear me out – It’s not my aim to *offend* -- but to *provoke*.
 - a. I *know* that the whole capital punishment-abortion-euthanasia debate is an area of great controversy, even among Christians.
 - b. what I’m saying is that the ***fact*** THERE **IS** A CONTROVERSY over this ought to be a loud wake-up call that some who call themselves “Christians” ARE NOT THINKING BIBLICALLY!
 - c. they’re not living out of a consistent Biblical Worldview.

- d. they've been seduced by our culture and it's headlong rush to *reject God* and embrace a naturalistic worldview.
8. Friedrich Nietzsche was a German philosopher at the end of the 19th century who realized the *implications* of the Materialistic Worldview with it's rejection of God.
 - a. Nietzsche said, "Where is God? I will tell you, we have killed Him."
 - b. as he peered into the future he saw how mankind, cut loose from the moral restraints that a belief in God endorse, would become brutal and unjust.
 - c. his vision of the future was so disturbing, Nietzsche went insane!
 - d. but not before he wrote of how certain men would rise to rule over others.
 - e. these were Nietzsche's "supermen" – a race of highly evolved men & women who would exert their will over others, deciding who should live and who should die – all for the sake of perfecting the human race and achieving the goal of evolution!
9. You should know that *Adolph Hitler* took these ideas of Nietzsche and used them as the basis of the *Third Reich* and the *Holocaust*.
 - a. he determined to make the *Arian race* the fulfillment of Nietzsche's *supermen*.
 - b. but the lesser people, Hitler said, like the Negroes, Jews, and other ethnic groups were subhuman weeds who would only hinder the evolution of man.
 - c. they had to be rooted out and destroyed that man might attain his evolutionary potential!
10. We wonder how one man like Hitler was able to convince a whole nation to adopt such an unthinkable policy and practice that would see the eventual extermination of some 6 million people!
11. Well, history tells us that Hitler wasn't alone in his views.
 - a. when he rose to power, the ideas he espoused were already well in place in many minds and circles of influence!
 - b. before Hitler was ever elected to the office of Chancellor, the doctors of Germany were regularly practicing infanticide and abortion.
 - c. many European philosophers were already advocating a "quality of life ethic"

- d. there was much discussion about removing those from society who were a drain on resources and couldn't contribute anything of value.
 - e. euthanasia of the elderly and disabled was well under way before WWII ever began.
 - f. Hitler came to power over an apparatus of death that was already well in place.
12. Margaret Sanger, the founder of *Planned Parenthood* and one of the main forces for the legalization of abortion in our nation considered Hitler a *hero* and totally agreed with the Holocaust.
- a. she makes no secret of her view that legalized abortion would help rid the world of human weeds and promote the process of evolution.
 - b. along with abortion, she advocated infanticide and euthanasia as a way to rid the world of the "weak and undesirable."
13. The "weak and undesirable" – those are terms which mean the assigning of value by one person to another.
- a. tell me - whose going to assign value to another's life?
 - b. what man or woman has the right to assign some arbitrary value to another?
 - c. the naturalist says that that's the duty of government, of those in power.
 - d. but the power of a government based on the naturalist worldview is simply the power of might, the right to do whatever they want because they are *in* power and wield it.
14. Over against this is the idea that government is ordained by God and GIVEN power by Him for the purpose of *protecting* life.
- a. no man or woman can *assign* value to another.
 - b. no! the duty of all men and women is to *recognize* the value of every life because it's God who assigns it!
 - c. and government's main task is to protect, honor, and uphold the sanctity of human life.
15. Any government that moves from this foundation has embarked on a path that will lead to its own destruction and will come before God for judgment for it has forsaken and then works against the very basis of its existence.

III. CONCLUSION

A. The Challenge

1. This is the challenge that confronts us this morning:
 - a. do we live out of a truly Christian & Biblical Worldview?
 - b. or are we materialists who've been seduced by the seductive influences of a culture of death?
2. It's not enough to call ourselves "Christians" and go to church.
3. It's not enough even to read our Bibles and pray.
4. The question and challenge is – does this shape us? Does it mold our choices?
5. The great Reformer Martin Luther said that even if I am right in every point of doctrine, if I fail to stand up for that truth the devil is *currently* attacking, then I have in effect denied the *whole faith*.
6. Friends, the devil is attacking on many fronts today – but the root and core of them all is what we're looking at here, the existence of God and man created in His image.
7. To be a Christian means above all else to believe not only *in* God but to *believe* HIM!
 - a. and He says that you and I are to recognize the specialness of human life;
 - b. any and all human life; regardless of age, race, or capacity.
 - c. from the infant in the womb to the 97 year old Alzheimer's patient in their deathbed.
 - d. from the Olympic athlete to the comatose patient on life support,
 - e. from the President of the United States to the emaciated beggar lying in the gutter of a Calcutta slum -
 - f. each and every one of us bears the image of God!
 - g. even though we've fallen and been marred by sin, still the image of God is left in the human soul – and there's no one past the redemptive power of Christ.
8. Government is ordained by God to *restrain* evil – but that's all it can do.
9. It possesses no power nor authority to *regenerate* the heart; that's the task God has mandated for the *Church* as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
10. I am going to say something now that I realize may rile a lot of feathers –
 - a. what we've looked at today in Genesis 9:5-6 places an

- obligation on us we cannot duck.
- b. if we're genuinely Christian with a Biblical worldview, then we cannot buy into the culture of death and convenience that has come to define public policy today.
 - c. regarding abortion I'm compelled to ask a question –
 - 1) and please understand that as I ask it, I'm taking no place of moral superiority.
 - 2) I ask from the place of one who's participated in this act and knows the evil & bitter fruit it bears.
 - d. so let me ask – in light of what we've looked at here in God's Word - how can the government grant a legal power to chose the death of the unborn when government's very foundation is the protection and preservation of life?
 - e. the answer is – IT CAN'T!
 - f. the law of the land may *say* abortion is legal – but the Law of God says it's a crime, a sin, and that of the most dangerous and serious kind.
 - g. because we're created in the image of God, he who attacks another human being attacks God.
 - h. the one who kills another claws at the face of God.
11. Some might object and say, “But Lance, the Supreme Court says abortion isn't murder; they've ruled that a woman has a right to chose.”
 12. And I reply – which judge sits higher – the 9 in Washington or the One in Heaven?
 - a. the Supreme Court draws its legitimacy and authority from only one source -
 - b. ultimately, it's not the US Constitution that authorizes the Court, it's God.
 - c. their authority only extends as far as that granted by Him.
 - d. and the Roe V. Wade decision of 1973 that legalized abortion was nothing less than a suicide note for a nation that has forsaken God and put it's neck in the noose of a materialistic worldview.
 - e. Roe V. Wade was a watershed decision, a fundamental denial of our government's mandate to govern.
 - f. and we've since been set on a slippery slope that has seen our entire culture plunging into moral corruption and racing toward

ruin.

B. Back To The Start

1. We must pray for our nation.
 - a. we must pray that our leaders come back to a Biblical worldview and realize the central role of government –
 - b. to restrain evil and protect the sanctity of human life.
2. Where all that starts though, is right here, right now.
3. In our system of government, we elect our leaders.
 - a. we select those who reflect our values and beliefs.
 - b. so all of us have to confront this issue or worldview.
 - c. are we genuine Christians; Bible believing, Bible living followers of Christ?
 - d. or are we just Bible-*toting* religious pagans?
4. If we truly believe what we've looked at here in vs. 5 & 6 won't we put it into practice right now?
 - a. if I believe you're created in God's image and that God puts infinite value on you, won't I actively seek to recognize & honor that value?
 - b. won't I exercise care in how *I* treat you?
 - c. far from attacking and murdering you, I will *affirm* your worth; I will honor and respect you.
 - d. I'll be diligent to see you and everyone else as God sees them.
 - e. I'll be no respecter of persons based on age, or color of skin, or capacity to enrich or entertain me.
 - f. all thoughts of racism and prejudice will be rejected because I'll realize they're nothing but satanic attempts to pollute my heart with hate and a denial of the image of God which is the awesome gift He gives to each and every one of us.
5. If we want to see an end to the nearly 1½ million murders of unborn children a year in this nation, then it will begin with you & I looking with favor on others – ALL others, even that guy in the next car with his stereo up to ear-bleed levels.
6. Remember what Jesus said about murder – where does it begin? In the heart! So it's in the heart that we must begin – repenting of all hatred, for individuals, for groups!
7. We must pray that God will give us new eyes to see the glorious potential of *every* life. May He give us such eyes!