

**Genesis 9: 1-7; “Noah Given Dominion Blessings”, Sermon #9 in the series – “The Life of Noah”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, in the Morning Worship Service.**

In this message I would like to address the subject of man’s dominion. I want to speak about the true and real authority and responsibility that God has given to men. For that is what dominion is. God gave this dominion to Noah in this passage, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> representative head of mankind. What He was saying to Noah, and to all of us here this morning, is that man’s dominion, the authority that God has given to man as an image bearer, as the highest of all his earthly creation, is one of the greatest responsibilities that each of us has. Given that this is the case, we should learn to respond individually in terms of our recognizing what we should do, in relation to 3 important areas of our lives. They are – 1<sup>st</sup> – The dominion of fruitfulness (verses 1, 2, and 7). 2<sup>nd</sup> – The dominion of food (verses 3, 4). And 3<sup>rd</sup> – The dominion of executing justice. (verses 5, 6)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all - Let’s look first of all, at the Dominion of Fruitfulness that has been given to all men.**

It says, “So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’” This is a restating of the original mandate given to Adam in Genesis 1: 28 – “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” So God reissued His mandate. He gave to Noah and every one of his descendants dominion over the fish, and the birds, and every living thing that moves. This is the outworking of his being created in the image and likeness of God.

The animals were not created to rule the earth, the birds and the fish were not created to take leadership over the sky and the sea. But man was given this dominion. Man was originally created to have this dominion over God’s creatures as God’s representative. But sin entered in, to the whole natural order, through Adam’s sin. The knowledge of evil prevailed over the ability to do what was good and right. And it greatly marred man’s ability to exercise this dominion. The wickedness of man became so great, that, as we have seen, God destroyed all flesh with a Flood.

But now, Noah has the mandate re-issued, with the same end in mind. Only this time there would be certain differences. Now, the fear of men and the dread of them, would be upon every bird, and beast and fish. It appears that this fear would be placed in them by God, so that Man could exercise his dominion over other creatures in such a way that they would be there for his use and service. They would be, under most circumstances, naturally afraid to make men their prey. And men were given this dominion in order to see, that it was God’s good intention for them to fill the earth and subdue it.

So Noah and his household, and indeed everyone after him, were to be fruitful and multiply. This, of course was within the context of God’s having previously instituted marriage. None of these original institutions were abolished with the flood. They were re-established on a footing which recognized what God did, in judging the world with a Flood. The conditions would now be somewhat different for man now. Before the Flood, God allowed man free reign to all his lusts. During those days, God was proving to man, that apart from common and special grace, the thoughts of man’s heart were only evil continually.

But now God was giving mankind collective responsibilities. He would no longer curse the ground for man’s sake. He would bring common grace in varying measures to societies and men. And He would give special grace in salvation to all those whom He would choose. But the implication here is that man would have a greater responsibility to fulfill these mandates which were given. The first mandate was to be fruitful and multiply. As verse 7 says, “Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it.” Now, I hope that you can see that this mandate flies right in the face of what many people and societies teach in our day. They are very concerned with population control. They are concerned with limiting the number of children in families, and in promoting birth control in the schools, etc. All of this comes from unbelief, a non-recognition of God’s stated commands and

expectations.

God is not afraid of the overpopulation of His world. He is not afraid that there will not be enough food and provision to keep everyone alive. But because of needless fear and sinful unbelief in regard to what God has explicitly said, vast numbers of people today are deceived into thinking that numbers are the problem. The reason that whole societies and nations have great trouble with hunger and a lack of material possessions is because God will not bless their unbelief and their false worship. Wherever the gospel goes, so goes God's blessing along with it. God will always show forth the fact that the principles of righteousness, His principles of conduct are those which will produce fruitfulness in both a spiritual and a natural way.

The object of our lives is not simply to get more material blessings, and then to neglect or ignore God and the Bible. "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" Jesus says in Mark 8: 36. That is why our great nation is on a decline in so many ways. Any society or people that neglects, ignores, or despises the principles of God's truth will remain destitute of many blessings. And they will fall deeper and deeper into that darkness and ignorance which robs God of the glory due His name. And so, those people who live for sinful and worldly pleasures will only end up contributing to the poverty of the poorer people of the world living in conditions, that are worse than animals would accept.

You remember that it says in Proverbs 21: 17 – "He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich." But this mandate that we are studying establishes the sanctity of the sexual experience in marriage. It is not saying that we should live for sexual pleasures. Or, that we must have all the children we can. That was what brought trouble to the whole world of Noah's day, before the Flood. The mandate is saying that we should not think that sex is a vile or dirty thing. Rather, we should think of the sexual act in marriage as a powerful and beautiful and good thing when we see that this is what God has given to a man and a woman in the exclusive relationship of marriage. Sex is not an animalistic thing between the bearers of the image of God, in the marital state. It is God's gift to be fruitful and multiply.

Flowing out this good gift, we can say that it is God's gift for a married couple to have children. It is God's gift when a husband and his wife think of each other in this loving, thoughtful, physical way in marriage. Sex is not animalistic in terms of the number of children that you have, or whether you will or will not use birth control. The mandate to have children is there, but you do not have to fulfill it mindlessly. You fulfill it thoughtfully, and with consideration for your partner in marriage. The same Bible that says, "Be fruitful and multiply," also says, "Thou shall not kill." A man must care for the thoughts and feelings and the physical well-being of his wife.

This mandate is not a moral command, like one of the Ten Commandments. It is a mandate designed to eliminate man's fears. So, let us who are married, not be afraid to have children. Or to somehow think that we are better off if we never have them. It may be a selfish wicked mindset that leads us to those conclusions. Let us remember that, as a society, and as those who would honor the institution of marriage, that God would have us to be fruitful and multiply.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> – Man's dominion consists of the Dominion of Food.**

In verse 3, God says to Noah – "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs." Now let us think of it this way: The conditions of the earth were so good before the Flood, the longevity of man's life was sustained so well by those conditions, and by God's immediate blessing, that men could easily be sustained by eating only green herbs for food. I am not sure whether men ate meat much, before the Flood, but I suspect that some did, and perhaps they ate it in wrong ways as well. They ate it without draining the blood out of it. Perhaps they cut off parts of a living beast and ate them while still warm.

Whatever it was, God saw fit to define things better for all men with this permission to eat meat. Man's diet was not to be limited to the green herbs, as before, but every moving thing that lived and moved would be food for him. But that permission was qualified by the command not to eat the flesh, "with its life, that is, its blood." (verse 4) This permission to eat all different kinds of meats

was not a mandate saying that we have to eat all kinds of strange animals. But it gives permission to eat them, except for their blood. God sees fit to prohibit eating the blood, because the animal's life, and a human being's life is found in its blood. If you lose much blood you will die.

But God sets apart the blood here as having life in it, so that when it would come time for Him to send Jesus Christ into the world, and give to him a physical body, that we would see the preciousness of the life that was in His blood. That we would see that the shedding of that blood in death would bring to us by faith, in a spiritual sense, eternal life. So blood is not to be seen as a food for men. But it is to be set apart in our minds as the bodily element of physical life, as we find it here. And it is the basis of any man's obtaining eternal life, as Jesus says in John 6: 54. "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

So all mankind has been given dominion, in terms of the physical food that we will eat. But it does not include the blood of any creature, either man or the animals. This prohibition does not include blood transfusions, as some cultish groups assert. For that is not eating. The intent of a transfusion is to help in order to save life. You must however eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood to have eternal life. He is not speaking of cannibalism. He was speaking of receiving His work of the suffering on the cross, as food which He has prepared that you will partake of spiritually and be saved.

You must receive a spiritual transfusion of life from Jesus Christ in order to be saved. This will take away the dominion of sin over your life and restore the fallen image of God in you. So I hope that each of us will receive this blessed mandate of the dominion of food. Often, people living in a fallen world, like ourselves, need more than green herbs to sustain us. We need some real protein. We need some meat to give us strength. Some people's consciences cannot permit them to eat meat. But we should understand that it is lawful, and yet we must not legislate in the area of food for another person.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – Man's dominion consists of executing justice, because of the image of God in him.**

Genesis 9: 6 says – "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man." So let us clearly understand what is being said here. The dominion mandate of capital punishment is being set forth here. It is a responsibility which was given to national, state, or local groups of people, representatively appointed by them, and acting together. Justice cannot righteously be enacted righteously by one person acting alone, even as an appointed judge. The reason that executing justice is never a personal matter, is because it can only be done on the basis of more than one witness to the truth of any matter. This is so the truth can be confirmed.

This is especially necessary when a judge is trying a murder case. If he would render a just judgment, and hand down the verdict in a wise and righteous way, he himself must be held accountable for his own determinations. If he hands down a just sentence, and then has that sentence of death lead to the execution of the criminal, as is being spoken of here in our text, it must take place under the collective power and hopefully wise discernment of the civil government. This verse is the beginning of civil government in the Bible. This is where it was first mandated. This is where it first had its beginning.

You do not hear of civil government in the antediluvian world. That is why there was so much lawlessness, and so much violence that men got away with. Man was not given dominion to exercise justice, then, or to enact capital punishment before the flood. God put a mark on Cain in Genesis 4: 15, so that no one would kill him. Lamech boasted in Genesis 4: 23 that he had killed a young man on a whim, and nothing apparently was done about it. But one of the main reasons that God destroyed that whole world was because of their extreme violence towards each other. It was not as though that God could not have taken vengeance on the murderer in that day. But, we find, that for holy and wise reasons, He did not enact capital punishment during that time period. He was leaving men to themselves then, to prove the point later, that civil government really was needed among men.

With His giving man dominion to exercise justice through civil government, God was declaring that that it would be a better world, and a less dangerous world, if men had a mandated responsibility through the civil government. Criminals would be punished. If they committed murder they would be put to death through a righteous process. It was because men were created in the image and likeness of God that God mandated capital punishment. It was now true that he would, as He says in verse 5, “demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast, and from the hand of every man,” who is a murderer.

But the way that God intended to curb greater and greater violence in society, and the way that we should curb it now, is by means of enacting capital punishment. Capital punishment is a deterrent in this way. But even more, it is what God wants from us as responsible nations before Him, in this generation and all the generations coming until the end of the world. Whoever murders his brother, a fellow human being, is taking a stab at the image of God. That is, at God Himself. God is saying here, that He believes that it is the greatest execution of justice to punish sin, and especially this sin of murder.

We are now living in a day when many people in our society do not believe that any crime ought to be punished with physical death. They think that life imprisonment is more humane and they think that it is effective to bring justice. And, it is less cruel they think. But they have forgotten a very important truth, or they choose to ignore it. God thinks that all sin is a great enough offense in His sight to require punishment; even eternal punishment. The wages of sin is death. The whole race of mankind was punished with physical death because of one man’s sin, even Adam’s. Everyone who will not believe in Jesus Christ will perish eternally.

Justice is something that we must learn from God. And God shows us just what our sins deserve in what He did to His Son at Calvary’s cross. Justice, in terms of our sin, and in terms of our salvation, meant that Jesus must die and bear the punishment due to our sins, even everyone who believes in Him. It meant that God’s wrath was poured out on Him in the place of all of His people. And so He knew that it would be best for men to learn justice, in part, by participating in the mandate of capital punishment.

Those people who do not believe in capital punishment are saying in so many words, that no one deserves to be punished for their sins and their crimes. They only need to be reformed and rehabilitated. God says that they need to be punished. And in the case of murderers, that punishment is death. This has nothing to do with personal revenge, or the relatives of the one murdered having the “enjoyment” of seeing the murderer suffer. It has everything to do with what God thinks that the murder deserves, and what will keep others from committing the same crime. The truth is; that we are all sinners, all guilty of many sins before God.

Murder is a sin which deserves capital punishment, more than many other sins, because it strikes at the image of God. That is why it deserves this punishment. A lesser punishment diminishes the offence. It diminishes the importance and significance of the fact that God is a God of Holiness and Justice. People then wrongly conclude that somehow God tolerates sin, and that He will never punish the wicked in hell. But this is the very reason why Jesus had to die. This is why He had to suffer capital punishment, not for His sins, but for ours. He had to satisfy God’s justice. It was so that God could be just, and still justify the sinner.

In closing, will you not see that man’s dominion in these areas all rests upon the fact that you and I are not animals? We were created in the image and likeness of God. Let us by faith in God’s word, see that we were not created to live like brute beasts, or like men who make up their own minds and their own rules. But God in His goodness has given us the dominion of fruitfulness in our marriage, great variety in our food, and the ability to execute judgment as a society. He has done this so that we might understand that His way is the very best way. He gives dominion to men and nations, that we might glorify Him.