

**Genesis 9: 1-7; “Man’s Dominion, Defined and Distinguished”, Sermon # 33 in the series- “Beginnings”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on July 3rd, 2005, in the Morning Worship Service, and again on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**

We are living in days where the distinction between man and the animals is not very clearly seen or understood, by people around us. When I was in the process of drawing up this sermon, I was watching the news and I heard about some young men who had video taped their torture of an opossum, and then, what was worse; they set the animal on fire, making all kinds of stupid and cruel comments about it, as they filmed. Surely this was a senseless and stupid thing to do. Being cruel to animals is not acceptable in God’s sight. Proverbs 12: 10 says, “A righteous man regards the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” But the thing that was really disturbing to me, was the tremendous outcry on the part of the community and the news media. They were treating this act as something that deserved great punishment. The indignation of the people who were interviewed, as well as the reactions of the newscasters revealed a total lack of discernment in relation to the difference between the animals and man. It reveals a blindness in them that you and I need to address. They will become very indignant over the mistreatment of an animal, in which the image of God is not present, and yet some will justify the killing of children in the womb, children who have been made in the image and likeness of God. That is a crime. That is a travesty.

So this morning 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, based on the mandate that God gave to Noah in this passage, as the 2nd representative head of mankind. What God is saying to Noah, and to all of us here this morning, is that man’s dominion, the authority that man has been given as an image bearer of God, the highest of all his earthly creation, consists of particular responsibilities that each of us as human beings should engaging in, in the sight of our holy God. We should learn to respond righteously in a collective way in human government, and individually in terms of our recognizing what we should, do in relation to 3 important areas of our lives. These areas mentioned in our text, which are a good sampling of what man’s dominion consists of; directly relate to our being created in the image and likeness of God. They are; the dominion of fruitfulness (Verses 1, 2), the dominion of food (Verses 3, 4), and 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.**

Verses 1 , 2 and 7 are in view here. 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.” God giving Noah and every one of his descendants dominion over the fish, and the birds and every living thing that moves, 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, and man is. 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 marred greatly 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 with 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 there, so that Man could exercise his dominion over other creatures, in 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. Noah and his household and indeed everyone after him, were to be fruitful and multiply. This, of course is within the context of God’s having previously instituted marriage.

None of these original institutions were abolished with the flood. They are re-established on a footing which recognizes what God did, in judging the world with a Flood, and conditions being somewhat different for man after that. God allowed man free reign to all his lusts, before that flood, to prove that apart from common and special grace, that man’s heart, the thoughts of his heart, were only evil continually. But now God is giving mankind collective responsibilities. He will no longer curse the ground for man’s sake. He would bring common grace in varying measures to societies and men, and special grace in salvation to those whom He would choose, but the implication here is that man would have a great responsibility to fulfill these mandates which are given. The first mandate is to be fruitful and multiply. As verse 7 says, “Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply in it.”

Now, I hope that you 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 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 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 principles of righteousness as the principles of that which produces fruitfulness in both a spiritual and a natural way. The object of our lives is not to get material blessings and 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 and fall deeper and deeper into that darkness and ignorance. And people who live for sinful and worldly pleasures will only contribute to the other poorer people of the world living in conditions that are worse than animals would accept.

This mandate establishes the sanctity of the sexual experience in marriage. It is not saying, live for sexual pleasures and have all the children you can. That was what brought trouble to the whole world of Noah's day, before the Flood. It is saying, "Do not think that sex is a vile or dirty thing." "Think of sex as a powerful and beautiful and good thing when it is engaged in, in 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. It is God's gift to have children within marriage. 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 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. Let us 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.

### **2ndly- Man's dominion consists of the Dominion of Food.**

Verse 3 states, "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 lives shall be food for you," He says. But that

permission is 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 is 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 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 and that the shedding of that blood in death would bring to us by faith, and in a spiritual sense, eternal life. 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 life, as we find it here, and 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.” We have a dominion, in terms of our physical food that we eat, but it does not include the blood of any creature, either man or 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 is speaking of receiving the work of Jesus on the cross as food which He has prepared. 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 it, but we should understand that it is lawful, and not legislate in the area of food, for another.

**3rdly - Man’s dominion, because of the image of God in him, consists of the dominion of executing justice.**

This dominion is only executed in a collective sense and not in a personal sense. Executing justice is never a personal matter, because right judgment can only be done on the basis of witnesses and 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 is mandated and this is where it had its beginning. You do not hear of civil government in the antediluvian world. Its beginning is here in Genesis 9: 6. “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.” Man was not given dominion to exercise justice, 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 seems to boast 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 would not take vengeance on murder in that day. But He

did not enact capital punishment in that old world. But now, He seems to indicate that it will be a better world and a less dangerous world if men have a mandated responsibility through the civil government, to punish criminals, and especially the crime and sin of murder. It is because men are created in the image and likeness of God that God mandated capital punishment. It is 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 intends to curb greater and greater violence in society, and the way that we curb it, is by means of 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. Whoever murders his brother, a brother human being, is taking a stab at the image of God, 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. Life imprisonment is just as effective and less cruel they say. But we have forgotten a very important truth, or we 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 salvation meant that Jesus must die and bear the punishment due to our sins, 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 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, diminishes the importance and significance that God is a God of Holiness and Justice and that somehow He will tolerate sin and never punish the wicked in hell.

That is why capital punishment is the right response of a society, to murder. It says, “God we respect and honor your righteousness and justice.” “We will show You that we believe that we understand what this sin deserves, in the way that you have appointed. We as a society will execute the sentence which this murder

deserves, and we will hand him over to you, O God, without any long delays. If he repents of this sin, still justice must be served. If he believes in Jesus for the forgiveness of his sins, we will rejoice. But we know that still the execution of the sentence must be carried out. He may be pardoned by a governor or a judge, but we know that any mercy that comes to him in this life will not stop the justice of eternal punishment from being enacted in the life to come, if there is no repentance. Forgiveness in the sight of God is still based on the fact that Jesus Christ paid the punishment due the sins of any murderer. Justice must be done and it must be served. And it is either served upon the convicted murderer in capital punishment in this life; or that society neglects its God-given responsibility. That responsibility is, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed." Not in personal revenge, but in a trial by judge and jury. And the sentence ought to be death if the person is found guilty. This is 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 that 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, just so that we might understand that God's way is the very best way. He gives dominion to men and nations, that we might glorify Him.