



THE GIVER AND TAKER OF LIFE
Kevin Presley

Welcome to the program today. It's good to be with you as we begin a new week and I'm glad we can begin it by spending a few moments together in the Word of God.

Life is a precious thing. It's precious because it comes only from God. Life is a gift of God and conversely, death is a judgment of God. We read in the creation account of how God first formed the world and then how He by divine fiat filled it with life. When we consider the complexity of even the most basic forms of life, it is incredible to think that God imparted life into so many varieties of being. As the crowning act of creation, though, He created humankind in His own image. He made man and woman to not only live and breathe but to think, reason, make moral choices, and to live forever with Him. Death entered the scene, however, when man rebelled against God and sinned. Removed from the Tree of Life, all mankind became subject to physical death which is the consequence of sin. Ultimately, all physical death is the result of Adam's sin. (Romans 5:12) Both realities (life and death) are by the decree of God and God alone. Man is incapable of creating life and it is not his prerogative to take life – anyone's life! That is God's domain. I want to talk about that with you for a little while today.

In Deuteronomy chapter 32, Moses gave a song to the people of Israel, and in verse 39 we find this statement: ***"Now see that I, even I, am He, And there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there any who can deliver from My hand."*** Within this context a general truth is expressed: it is God who gives life, and it is God who takes life. We need to remember that because anyone who seeks to take another's life is usurping the

judgment that belongs only to God. We're living in perilous times where life not only seems cheap and expendable to some, but some believe they have the right to do only what God has the right to decree.

The earth has been teeming with life since the creation and life itself is still one of the greatest mysteries to the minds of mankind. The law of biogenesis states that life comes from life. Though unbelieving scientists posit the theory of abiogenesis (that originally, life naturally arose from non-living matter), that theory has never been proven. It has not been demonstrated or replicated. The bible teaches that life on earth came from the eternal, self-existent creator: God. Living things can reproduce but man has not and cannot create life. Only God has that power. Even the simplest forms of life are not simple at all. They are amazingly intricate and complex.

God values life but especially human life because He made human beings in His own image. Genesis 1:27 says: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." God created mankind to live forever allowing them to live in the presence of the Tree of Life. Sin changed that though. When Adam rebelled against the law of God, the punishment, as God had warned, was death. As Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden, they left under the curse of death and death became a reality for them and all who would come after them as a consequence of sin. Adam and Eve experienced spiritual death, as well since their fellowship with God was severed and every person who personally sins (which is every accountable person) also dies spiritually. But today, we're concerned about physical death which was the curse brought by Adam's sin. That curse says that Adam and his offspring would return to the dust from whence we came. So, death is an inevitable part of your future and of mine unless Jesus returns before that time comes. But just as the power to give life belongs to God alone, so does the authority to take life away. Therefore, the law of God says that is wrong to murder. In every dispensation of time, from Eden to now, God has condemned those who take life. Though Abel was sentenced to die just like the rest of us, because of Adam's sin, it wasn't his brother Cain's right to take Abel's life away. But Cain usurped that right. When he became jealous of Abel's offering being received by the Lord when his own was rejected, he rose and killed Abel and he sinned in doing so. The apostle John much later wrote in 1 John 3:11-12 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother..."

So, the law against murder was part of God's moral code revealed from the beginning of time. Later, when the nation of Israel was established, God codified those moral principles in the written Law that He gave to Moses. The sixth commandment the finger of God carved into the tables of stone was: "You shall not murder." (Exodus 20:13) Proverbs 6:16-17 tells us how God feels about murder, saying: "These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood." And God's character and His indignation against these things did not change with the changing of the covenants. The word abomination means something that God finds detestable. He hates it. Those things don't change with the passing of the ages or dispensations. In fact, the New Testament closes with

this stern warning in Revelation 21:8 “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, MURDERERS, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Those who commit murder – that is, those who take it upon themselves to take a person’s life and they do not repent will not be saved. God flatly condemns the taking of life not only because the law of love forbids it but also because God is the creator of life and therefore, He is the only One who has the right to take it away.

Not only do all people abide under the ultimate sentence of physical death but there are times when God has taken life as a form of personal judgment for sin. We read in the Old Testament, for example, where God commissioned His servants to sometimes take the lives of others whom God marked for judgment. He would send kings into battle on a mission to carry out His judgment on other nations or on other people. He would appoint a king like Saul or, as it ended up when Saul failed to complete his mission to execute the king of the Amalekites, a prophet like Samuel to carry out a death sentence. God has not given His church any such commission today. Israel was living under a divine national monarchy or a theocracy in that dispensation and God used them as a physical nation to accomplish his purposes in the world. That sometimes involved going to war with an enemy king and his army. It sometimes even involved the extermination of a wicked population.

Today, the church is not a geo-political or physical kingdom. It’s a spiritual kingdom. The only battles God has appointed us to fight are spiritual battles on spiritual battlefields using spiritual weapons. Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” In other words, our battles are theological and ideological, not physical. God never told any member of the New Testament church, including the apostles, to take anyone’s life because of their sin or for any other reason. He charged them and us to step onto the battlefield of ideas and spiritual matters and to only fight with the weapons of faith, not guns, swords, knives, or any other physical weapon. The only sword Christ placed in the hands of Christians is the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. (Ephesians 6:17) We are to love men and women and seek to conquer the kingdom of the world through winning its subjects over to allegiance to King Jesus by the entreaty of the gospel and to expose the works of darkness by reproof with the gospel: the Word of Truth. Interestingly, we read in the New Testament of soldiers in earthly armies hearing the gospel and becoming Christians, but we never read of a Christian becoming an earthly soldier. Rather, Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3-4 “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier **of Jesus Christ**. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”

The only people given the authority to take life are worldly people whom God has placed in positions of authority to rule in the affairs of civil state. Paul taught in Romans 13 that this world’s rulers (to whom Christians are to be subject as long as their laws do not violate the law

of God) those rulers are granted the authority by God to punish lawbreakers. He said in Romans 13:4 For he (the worldly man who sits in the seat of civic power) is God's minister to you (the Christians at Rome) 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." (He's not speaking of some despot or cruel dictator but the ruler who rules for the good of man.) Friend, that is the only provision that the New Testament makes for the taking of life. The government, not the Christian; not the civilian; the government has the power to punish lawbreakers. But notice that in doing so, they are acting by God's express authority; authority that He has not given to anyone else.

So, that alone should tell us the value that God places upon life and the sanctity of life which He created. Anyone who thinks they have the right or the authority to take the life of another person is usurping the authority that God alone possesses. And God has that right because: (1) He is the Creator and Giver of life (2) His judgment is perfect (3) It is perfect not only because He is perfect but because He has infinite knowledge and knows the beginning from the end, all of the facts involved, and the heart and motives of every person involved.

We've entered another cycle in history when life is considered by some to be expendable. Violence seems to be increasing and some seem to have very little regard for human life. It is a sad commentary on our culture, and it is a window into the human heart to see the bloodshed in our society that is becoming more and more common. I'm told that the twentieth century was the bloodiest one in the world's history. It's becoming commonplace to turn on the television and see the carnage of another mass shooting where some wicked or mentally troubled person coldly and calculatingly takes a gun into a school or a business or a church meeting place or a public event and opens fire killing men, women, and children they don't even know or care who they are.

You may disagree but it personally bothers me to see the glorification of violence in some of the video games people are playing, the arbitrary and gratuitous killing we watch in movies and television shows and the graphic displays of bloodshed put before us every day. This is certainly playing out in real life. In America's major cities, the number of shootings and murders every week have reached a staggering number. Last year in Chicago alone, 3,766 people were shot. That's more than 10 people per day. Almost 700 were murdered. Friend, all of this is the result of people not respecting the value and sanctity of life and regarding God as the giver of life.

And it's not just the violence we see in the streets. It's the taking of life in what should be the safest place in the world and that is a mother's womb. I want us to think about this: During all of the wars fought by the United States during her nearly 250-year history, we sustained more 1.1 million casualties. But since abortion became legal in the United States in 1973, more than 63-million abortions have taken place in this country. And contrary to what some want you to believe, less than one percent of those were babies conceived through rape or incest – less than one percent! Among the various reasons cited, the arbitrary choice of the mother is the cause of most abortions that take place. Many justify this deathly practice by saying that having an abortion is a woman's choice because it's her body and she has the right to do with her body

as she sees fit. There are two problems with that: one is that is not just her body, there is also the developing body inside of her. A body that very soon has a beating heart, a developing brain, arms, legs, fingers, and toes; a face; a being that can react to outside sounds and stimuli.

Now, friend, admittedly, I'm a preacher. And being a preacher, my business is to point people to the word of God. You're watching a program that's called "Let the Bible Speak" and so that's what we should be doing. That God recognizes the personhood of a child inside its mother's womb is being questioned according to the scripture. The word "brephos" in the Greek is used by Luke to describe the baby yet in Elizabeth's womb in Luke 1:41. It is used interchangeably for both prenatal and postnatal babies. According to Thayer, the word refers to "an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a newborn child, an infant, or a babe." And I ask today: Was it the Christ-child in Mary's womb or just a clump of cells or a blob of fetal tissue?

God said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

In Psalms 139:13-16, David said, "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them."

For anybody who is at all concerned what the bible teaches, it should be beyond question that what is within a mother's womb is a precious life. God gave that life regardless of the circumstances out of whence it arose. God gives life and breath to all things, said Paul in Acts 17:25. And though many want to play God and try to predict what that life will amount to and thus whether it should be allowed to live, God alone has that knowledge, we do not. We could cite case after case where circumstances would dictate that a child would be better off if the mother snuff out that life before it hardly begins but a child was allowed to live that ended up blessing the world in some way.

The second reason "It's my body and therefore it's my choice" is simply wrong is because it's really not her body. The body you have is not yours and the body I have is not mine. 1 Corinthians 6:19 "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" God gave you the body that you have, and it was given to you as an instrument for His will to be done. And we will answer to Him one day for how we used this body whether for our own sinful desires or for His service and His glory. Not only is our body to be used in the way God created it and for the purposes He created it for, life, whether it exists inside or outside of that body, is the creation and gift of God and is to be respected and cherished.

What is the answer to the culture of death in which we're living? Laws aren't ultimately the answer. We have laws that protect life. We've always had laws that protect life. And there are

those who try to enforce those laws in most places. What's missing is a reverence for the God who gives and takes life! What's missing is a sobering realization of what life is and where it comes from and just how precious it is. And how serious of a matter it is to usurp the place of God and think it is our right to take life as we see fit. It is not. And ultimately, what this world needs today is the Lord Jesus Christ and the love and concern for life that He taught and that He showed by giving up His own life that we might know an abundant life here and forever.

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