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Genesis 9:1 - 9:7



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg discusses the biblical account of Genesis 9 and how it relates to various topics such as the end times, the commandments given to Noah and his sons, and the role of government in punishing criminals. Gregg highlights how the story of Noah and the flood symbolizes universal judgments to come, and how the delay of Christ's Second Coming is due to God's desire to give people time to repent. He also examines the Jerusalem Council's decision on whether Gentile Christians should adhere to Jewish laws and customs, and the responsibility of governments in implementing justice. Throughout the discourse, Gregg provides insightful interpretations of biblical passages and their applications in contemporary times.

Transcript

Let's turn to Genesis chapter 9, and there we have the story of how Noah and his family proceeded after the flood, after they came out of the ark. In chapters 6 and 7 and 8, but especially in 7 and 8, we have the story of the flood itself. When Noah and his family came out of the ark after the flood, God made some resolutions, we could say, at the end of chapter 8, where we saw that Noah built an altar in verse 20 of chapter 8. This was the first act of Noah on the new, cleansed planet, with all the former sinful society and everything else washed away in a new beginning.

The first act was to dedicate the real estate to God, and to therefore build an altar and worship God. And when God responded to that, it says it was like a sweet-smelling aroma to him, the sacrifice was. And he said he would never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

He says, nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done. So here God resolves that there will never be another flood. He will repeat this in a covenant that he will make with Noah in chapter 9, but this is where he first is said to make that resolution.

And the cycles of the seasons, he says, will not be interrupted again as long as the earth remains. In verse 22 of chapter 8, while the earth remains, seed time and harvest, cold and heat, and winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease. So that is to say

there will be regularity, there will be predictability, no one has to wonder if they plant crops in this season whether there's going to be a general flood to change everything.

They can have some predictability about the weather, and not the weather so much as just the seasonal changes that will continue until the end of the world. And the flood, in a sense, is a type and a shadow of the end of the world. Remember, Jesus said that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.

And although the only point Jesus was making there was that people would be caught unawares, yet the flood that he spoke of and the coming of the Son of Man are both alike universal judgments. God has judged the world one time, and he will judge it again. In 2 Peter 3, Peter indicates that there would come a time when people would have doubts about whether Jesus is going to really come back and judge the world.

And Peter reminds us that the flood was one way in which God demonstrated that he meant business. In 2 Peter 3, it says in verse 3, knowing this first that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. In other words, the fathers, our ancestors, thought Jesus was coming, but he didn't come.

Where is he? Where is the fulfillment of that promise that he made? And the implication is, looks like maybe it's not going to happen after all, is it? Our ancestors expected him, but they're dead, they've fallen asleep, everything continues as before. Looks like there'll be no end to the world. And in verse 5, Peter says, For this they willingly forget, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, that is, they were created, they existed of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which, that is, by water, the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.

So he says, they think that the world will never end, they think that God will never judge humanity, and they must be forgetting something. He did it already once before, and therefore he has shown that he is willing to put teeth to his threats, and yet he waited a long time before, too. Prior to the flood, he predicted the flood with the birth of Methuselah, and the name, when he is dead it shall be sent, or his death will bring it, and then God prolonged that period of time by making Methuselah the longest known living man, and showing that God was reluctant to judge, but notwithstanding his reluctance, he still got around to it.

And so also if the coming of Christ seems to be delayed, it may be because God is reluctant to judge. Peter actually says that is true, because he says in verse 9, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, that is, he is not a flacker, he has made a promise, he is not delaying beyond the point that he really ought to, he has a reason for this. Some men count him slack, but he is long suffering, that means patient toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

So there is a delay in the second coming and the judgment of the world, just as there was a delay of the flood. Why? Because he wants to give more people opportunity to repent. But in 2 Peter 3.7, he says, But the heavens and the earth which now exist, and he is the word that created the heavens and the earth, the same word maintains them now, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

So there will not be another flood, but there will be another judgment. It will not be a flood of water, it will be a fiery judgment. So in verse 10, Peter says, But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat, both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

So there will be an end of the world, there will be a general cosmic judgment, and it will come upon all people, just as the flood did. However, just as in the flood, God knew there was a remnant, he knew there were those who were faithful, not very many, but in that day there were some. And he built, or he had built, an ark.

A safety place, a chest where the remnant could be preserved. That ark has often been seen by Christians as a type of Christ. Actually, in 1 Peter chapter 3, Peter talks about our baptism as being prefigured in Noah's family going through the water to safety, as they went through the judgment waters to safety on the other side, so we have come to baptism, gone through the water, and come out saved on the other side, says Peter.

In 1 Peter 3, it says, we talked about these verses in another connection, but in verse 19 it says, Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism. If you don't know the word antitype, it's the opposite of a type.

A type is an event or a thing or an institution or a person in the Old Testament whose existence or career bears a resemblance to something spiritual in the New Testament. So, the exodus, for example, of Israel out of Egypt is seen as a type of salvation for us. The Passover lamb is seen as a type of Christ, and so forth.

Old Testament events and people and institutions often prefigure or foreshadow something spiritual that is manifest in the New Testament, and when they do so, they are called a type. The New Testament actually uses this word type. It's tupas in the Greek, and type is simply the English word for type.

Transliteration of tupas. But when you have a type, of course the type anticipates something. Well, the thing it anticipates is called the antitype, and that's actually the Greek word that's used in this passage in Peter.

He says there is an antitype. Antitype is the corresponding thing of a type, just as a fulfillment is the corresponding part of a prophecy or a prediction. If there's a prediction, it has a fulfillment.

If there's a type, it has an antitype. So, Peter tells us that there is an antitype of this flood. The flood, then, he says, is a type, and the antitype is baptism, which also saves us, he says.

So, salvation through the water is depicted in water baptism, and salvation through the water has its type and shadow in the flood, and the remnant of the believers, who are being saved through the flood, on the ark, the ark itself being a type of Christ. It's interesting that the word pitch that is used in Genesis when it talks about how the ark was sealed with pitch inside and out, or tar, or something like that. That Hebrew word, pitch, is the same word that's used later in Leviticus for atonement.

Literally, it means a covering, but it was some kind of tar or something they used to seal the cracks in the ark. So that the waters of judgment could not get through to the persons and animals inside the ark. And that which protected them, that which kept them dry, that which kept them untouched by the judgment, was this pitch that was put between the cracks of the ark, and it's just an interesting coincidence, maybe, maybe not a coincidence, that that's the same word in Hebrew that's used for atonement.

It is the atoning work of Christ that, of course, shields us from the judgment also. So there's a lot of intentional types in this story. I haven't really sought to unpack all of them, simply because of the limits on our time, but that is how the New Testament develops these ideas that we've just studied in Genesis, especially in 7 and 8. Now we're in chapter 9. It says, So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

Now this is what he had told Adam and Eve originally, so it's kind of got that deliberate echo, like, OK, we've started, we've hit the reset button here. I started with one couple and gave them this command. Things didn't go that well.

We've cleaned everything up. We've reset the, we've rebooted, you know, and now we'll start over. We'll start again with the same command.

By the way, this would seem to imply that they were supposed to spread out and fill the earth eventually, that their descendants were supposed to multiply and spread out till the earth was filled. It is no doubt because they refused to do this at the Tower of Babel, in fact their very intention in chapter 11, in building the Tower of Babel, was that they might not be scattered throughout the world, it says. They said, Let's build a tower and a city so we won't be scattered throughout the world.

Seems like that was a deliberate revolt against this particular command, and perhaps

was one of the principal reasons that God interrupted that project. So Adam and Eve were told to do this, and they did it, but their seed were wicked. And so now we start out fresh with a clean family again.

So it would seem. But we find by the end of the chapter, things are not entirely clean. And that, you know, you can take men out of the sinful world, but you can't necessarily take the sinful world out of the men.

He says to Noah and his sons in verse 2, And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.

I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. Now, this is different than what he told Adam and Eve. Now, he gave them a command that's identical to what he told Adam and Eve, but then he made a modification, too.

Something has changed, because back in Genesis 1, when God was giving his commission to Adam and Eve, it says in verse 28 that God gave them dominion over the animals, but they apparently were not to eat the animals. In verses 29 and 30, it says, See, I have given you every herb. Genesis 1, 29.

I have given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth, and to every tree that yields fruit. To you it shall be for food. Also to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food.

Now, he does not there explicitly forbid Adam and Eve to eat animals, but he makes it very clear that God has given them the plant life for food. And here, the way God speaks here, it sounds as if he had previously forbidden them to eat anything but plants, because it says in verse 3 here in Genesis 9, I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. In other words, as I had formerly given you the herbs and the plant seeds, I am expanding that to additional dietary supplements, which are meat.

Now, the question of why meat was added to human diet at this point is not ever explained in the Scripture. I mean, it would appear that God had made plants sufficiently nutritious that they could sustain a healthy human life without animal food, without meat originally. But now, was that changing? He says now the animals are going to be afraid of you, the dread of you and the fear of you is going to be on every beast.

It may be that because humans did not eat animals previously, that animals and men were much more in harmony. That would certainly have been true in the Garden of Eden before the fall. It is possible that even after the fall, there was not much problem between wild animals and people.

In Germany, you can get a bowl of blood soup. It sounds kind of gross to me, but if I was raised in Germany, maybe I wouldn't have thought so. But the Jews avoid blood.

Now the question is, should we? It is forbidden here, long before the time of Moses. It is forbidden in the law of Moses. Is it also forbidden in the New Testament? Well, there's apparently one passage in the New Testament that might suggest so.

That is in Acts chapter 15, though of course the teaching of Acts 15 is also going to have to be compared and possibly qualified by other things the New Testament says on the same subject. But in Acts chapter 15, we find that there was a question raised when Gentiles began to come to Christ and were not circumcised. The question was raised whether they should be circumcised, because earlier all Christians had been Jews, and all Jews had been circumcised as they be.

So for years after Pentecost, there was no such thing as an uncircumcised Christian, as near as we could tell. Now possibly the Ethiopian eunuch, but he might have been a proselyte. If he was a proselyte, he too was circumcised.

But the point is, the issue had not come up in Jerusalem or in the places where the apostles lived, as to what to do about Gentiles who became Christians and had not been circumcised at birth, as the Jews had been. And the reason this was an issue is because they recognized that Christianity was an adaptation of the older arrangement that God had made in the Old Testament of Israel. This was a fulfillment of the hopes of Israel, this was a new covenant made with the house of Israel, and it wasn't clear exactly whether people had to become officially part of Israel to become a Christian.

In the Old Testament, a Gentile could become a Jew, but they had to be circumcised to do it, and they'd be called a proselyte. A proselyte was a non-Jewish person by birth who decided to become a Jew and went through the process. If they were male, they had to be circumcised, they had to offer a sacrifice, they had to go through a baptism later on in history, they instituted that, and they had to of course follow the law of Moses from then on.

So, that was the mentality of the Christians in the early days, they were all Jewish themselves, they didn't have to deal with the question of uncircumcised believers, because Gentiles weren't coming into the church initially. But when they did, many in the church thought, well these people should become Jewish first, this is a Jewish Messiah we're serving, this is the Jewish prophet's promises that are made to Israel, and if Gentiles want to be part of it, well let them come, but let them come clean, not unclean, let them be circumcised, let them become part of Israel, and they can be part of Israel's Messiah. That was what the Judaizers taught, and this had never really been addressed directly by the Jerusalem Apostles, because they didn't have to deal with it in Jerusalem.

Essentially everyone in the Jerusalem church were Jewish, but Paul had to deal with it,

because he and Barnabas had been out among Gentiles evangelizing them and winning them, and Paul had concluded, in fact we might not even say he concluded, in Galatians chapter one he said it was revealed to him by Christ, that it's not necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised. The new covenant was new, and it did not require that Gentiles become Jews before they become Christians, they could go directly from being Gentile to being Christian, rather than going through the transition of becoming Jewish first. Now this became a controversy after the first missionary journey that Paul and Barnabas had made to the Gentile regions, and when Paul and Barnabas came back to their home church that had sent them out, which was the church of Antioch, in Acts chapter 14, they were reporting how the Gentiles had gotten saved, but there were some Jerusalem Christians visiting Antioch who said, well these people need to be circumcised, you can't just let them be baptized and be Christian without being circumcised.

And Paul and Barnabas argued with these Judaizers, and eventually, because they couldn't reach agreement, it was decided they would go to Jerusalem to settle the question. And so the Jerusalem apostles had never made an official declaration about this matter, whether Gentiles need to be circumcised and become Jews. So the council was held, and that's the subject matter of Acts 15, and Peter gave testimony, Paul gave testimony, apparently others did too.

Eventually, James, the leader of the church at that time in Jerusalem, stood up and made a decision based on what Peter and Paul and others had said. The decision was, no, the Gentiles do not have to become Jewish. They don't have to be circumcised, they don't have to be put under the Jewish law.

However, James did say, I would request that a few stipulations be made, and that the Gentiles be asked to follow a few rules here. Now, you have to remember that Gentile in those days didn't just mean someone like an American, you know, most of us are Gentiles, but we're also Christianized. Gentiles in those days were pagans who worshipped idols.

They went to idol temples. They practiced fornication, because the idol temples actually had temple prostitute priestesses. That was part of the worship of some of the goddesses, was to sleep with a prostitute at the temple.

I mean, only the Jews had anything like what we call a Christian morality in those days. The Gentiles were entirely pagans. And so the Jews found pagans, Gentiles, disgusting.

And some of the practices of the Gentiles were particularly disgusting, including the fact that the Gentiles would eat blood and they'd do idolatrous things. And so James writes, James says this in Acts 15, verse 19 and following, James said, Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God. That is, we shouldn't trouble them to become Jewish.

That's the context. We shouldn't require them to get circumcised and become part of the Jewish faith. But, he says, my counsel is that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, which means the remnant meat that had been taken from animals sacrificed in idolatrous temples.

The remnants of these animals were sold in the marketplace just to the general public. So they would sacrifice a bull in the temple. Some of the meat would be used for the ritual, the rest would be taken and sold in the marketplace.

And so in the Gentile world, if you bought meat on the streets in the marketplace, you were often buying meat, as the Jews say, polluted by idolatry. And he said we should write to them, asking them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, which was very commonplace among the Gentiles, from things strangled, and from blood. He says, for Moses has had throughout many generations those who preached him in every city being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

Now here we have a New Testament decree asking Gentiles to abstain from eating blood, which brings us, of course, back to the subject of Genesis 9.4, that blood should not be eaten. So some would say, well, this settles the question, then, doesn't it? We shouldn't eat blood. We should buy our meat from the kosher meat market, from the kosher butcher, where they've drained all the blood out.

But it's not that easy, it's not that simple, because Jesus, when he was himself talking to the Pharisees about things clean and unclean, in Mark chapter 7, said it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles him, but it's what comes out of a man's mouth that defiles him. That's what Jesus said in Mark 7.15. And the disciples wondered about what he meant there, and so they asked him, and in Mark 7.18 he said to them, Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him? That's how sleeping, anything that goes into your mouth as food, anything you consume from outside cannot defile you. Now, under the law, many things that you would eat would defile you.

Any unclean food, certainly blood, meat sacrificed to idols, all those things would defile you if you ate them. But Jesus said, Nothing that goes into your mouth will defile you. He said, Because it does not enter his heart, but his stomach, and is eliminated.

And then, verse 19, the end of Mark 7.19 says, Thus purifying all foods. Now, scholars have a difference of opinion whether that word, thus purifying all foods, is what Jesus said. That your body purges foods.

They go in one end and come out the other, and therefore, you're cleansed. They never enter the heart or defile you in any spiritual way. But most scholars seem to think that thus purifying all foods is Mark's own comment on Jesus' remark.

That when Jesus said, What goes into a man's mouth will not defile him, that Mark gives his commentary, as it were, in parenthesis. It's not punctuated that way in our Bible here, but it can be, and it is in some translations. But Mark is saying, In saying this, Jesus purified all foods.

Means he declared all foods were clean. Now whether Mark is making that comment or not, Jesus does say that what goes into a man's mouth is not what defiles him. In fact, he says nothing that enters a man's mouth can defile him.

Did he include blood in his thoughts about this? Hard to say. I would point out, though, that when James asked the Gentiles not to eat blood, he also said not to eat things sacrificed to idols or things strangled. Now, by the way, things strangled, there was no law in the law of Moses that forbade the eating of a strangled animal.

But I think the strangling of animals is pretty unusual. It must have been part of a pagan ritual, or perhaps the concern was that when an animal is strangled, it might even be accidentally strangled, the animal got caught in the fencing and got itself strangled. You don't eat a corpse that you haven't freshly butchered, because you can't get all the blood out.

The blood begins to coagulate and so forth, and you really need to eat the animal while it's fresh. You have to drain the blood while it's fresh. Hard to say exactly what the thing strangled, the issue there was.

It's not really something mentioned in the Old Testament. But the meat sacrificed to idols is, in the New Testament, many times spoken of. And the Christian rule about that is discussed in the New Testament.

And apparently the rules about eating meat sacrificed to idols are the same thing as the rules about eating blood. I mean, they're listed in the same list of don'ts, along with fornication too. And Peter and, excuse me, after James said this, they wrote a letter to the Gentile churches making these requests, and they sent the letter by the hands of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentile churches.

So when Paul and Barnabas made the second missionary journey, although they parted company and went two different ways, they carried with them copies of this letter from the Jerusalem Council to give to the churches. Among the churches that Paul went to after this was the Church of Corinth. And it's very instructive to look at what he said to the Church of Corinth, because when Paul went to the Church of Corinth on his second missionary journey, he carried with him the letter from the Jerusalem Council.

Obviously, he was under obligation to share it with them, and so he must have done so. But it would appear that he did so with some misgivings. Now, I'm reading between the lines here, but I think it's the only way to read between some of these lines.

Paul ministered in Corinth for eighteen months, and then he left, after which he wrote 1 Corinthians to them. Now, when he wrote 1 Corinthians to them, I think he alluded to things that he had said to them while he was there. And some confusion had arisen in Corinth after Paul left, apparently over something Paul had said.

And look at 1 Corinthians 6, if you would, because in 1 Corinthians 6, verse 12, Paul says, All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful, or expedient. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought unto the power of any. Foods for the stomach, and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them.

But now the body is not for fornication or sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. And then he goes on to explain that fornication is improper for Christians. But notice what he says, all things are lawful for me, he says, then he goes into the matter of foods.

And most scholars believe that when Paul says, all things are lawful to me, and he says it repeatedly in 1 Corinthians, by the way, that every time he says it, he's quoting someone in Corinth that is saying, all things are lawful for me, and is using that as an excuse to go into the idolatrous feasts as a Christian and participate in those feasts. Why? Why do we think that? Because they were doing that. Paul has the right to instruct them not to do that.

Some of the Christians felt that their liberty was such they could go into the idolatrous feasts. And they were saying, all things are lawful to me, and most scholars believe they were quoting Paul. When Paul had been with them before, he had taught them that all things are lawful.

And now these people are quoting Paul as an excuse to go and participate in the idolatrous feasts, and Paul writes back and says, well, yes, all things are lawful, but not everything is helpful. Not everything is a good thing to do. Not everything promotes spiritual peace and spiritual well-being in the church or in your own life.

So even if some things are lawful, you have to be discerning as to whether the thing you're giving yourself the liberty to do is really something that's advantageous spiritually or not. And if not, you shouldn't do it. It is implied.

And he says there in verse 13, foods are for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. In other words, the foods you eat are perishable. Even your own stomach will eventually perish, and the foods that you digest will perish.

Digesting food is a temporary intrusion of matter into your body that goes out the other way, and it doesn't have long-lasting effects. It is not, therefore, a moral issue, Paul is saying, what you put in your mouth. And in that, Paul is agreeing with Jesus.

But in what context? I believe it's in the context of meat-sacrificed idols. Now, here's

what I think went on, if I could paint for you a scenario. I think that when Paul received this letter from James, Paul was willing to submit to that, because that's what he had come to the Jerusalem Council for, to submit to their decision.

And they had decided that Paul and his friends should tell the Gentiles to abstain from these several things. But Paul knew that that was not the law of God, that was a request from James and the Jewish brethren. Why? Well, let me show you why.

Back in Acts chapter 15, where that decree was made, we already read these words, I call them to your attention again, Acts 15, in verses 20 and 21, where James has listed these things. He says that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. Notice the reason that James gives for this.

He doesn't say, because these things are abomination to God. No, he says we should tell them to do that, because Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city being read every day, every Sabbath in the synagogues. What's he saying? He's saying every city where the Gentiles are, there are Jews.

And for generations, they've heard the law read in their synagogues every Sabbath. They've got sensitivities, and there are many in these Gentile cities who are these Jews with these sensitivities. Moses has been preached to them for generations.

And what I think James is saying is, I'm not saying that these things are moral issues. I'm saying that these are, although fornication is, but we'll talk about that in a separate issue in just a moment, and Paul does too, but he's saying that these are notable practices of Gentiles that offend Jewish sensibilities. And James, who we know was concerned about Jews being saved, he wrote the letter of James to Jews.

He was the leader of the Church of Jerusalem. James' heart was for those Jews who were zealous for the law and that they might be reached. And James was concerned, I think, that although they were letting the Gentiles not become Jewish, they hoped that Gentiles might be circumspect about things that offend Jewish people, things that Gentiles often did and were known to do that were offensive to moral Jews.

And so he says, here's some of the things Gentiles commonly do that offend Jews. Please tell them to avoid these things. Why? Because it's a command of God? Not necessarily, but because his concern is the offense to the Jew, because in every city there's many people who've had Moses' laws read to them through the generations, and they're going to be sensitizers.

And this is exactly what Paul, Paul takes up the spirit of this, because Paul also tells the Corinthians, all things are lawful. You can eat anything you want to, but not if it offends your brother, not if it offends someone. He says, if my eating meat offends my brother,

then I won't eat meat the rest of my life, he said.

This whole discussion is occupying 1 Corinthians 8, 9 and 10. It's like three chapters he writes to the Corinthians explaining this, saying it's okay to eat anything. As far as God's concerned, he hasn't restricted anything, but there are things which if you eat them in front of certain people, it's going to offend them.

And in this, I think Paul was seeking to obey the spirit of what James wished. Paul is saying, you know, James says not to eat meat sacrificed to idols or things strangled or blood or fornications on that list, too. He says, but I want you to know that what you eat, it's not an issue with God, but it is an issue with people.

Therefore, you're not breaking some moral command if you eat whatever you eat. He even says, when you go into the marketplace, eat whatever you buy, whatever you want. So the meat stands.

If you're invited over to a Gentile house and they serve you meat, just eat whatever they serve you. But he says, if they mention to you, this is meat sacrificed to idols, well, then it means it's an issue to them and they think maybe you should know that because they think you should need it. Then don't eat it because they think you shouldn't and therefore don't.

But if they don't tell you, just go ahead and eat it because God doesn't care. What Paul is saying is God doesn't care what you eat. People care what you eat and you should decide what you're going to eat based on what will promote the gospel, what will not offend people unnecessarily.

And you should do all things with that in mind. So he says in 1 Corinthians 10 or 31, he says, therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10 31.

You can eat, you can drink, but don't do anything that's not going to glorify God. And it doesn't glorify God for you to offend people who you're trying to reach. But here's what happened.

So I believe Paul brought the letter to Corinth and to the other Gentile churches and he explained it this way. The brothers in Jerusalem want you to abstain from these things. Therefore you should.

But let me just explain to you. God doesn't really care about all these things. Some of these things are non-issues with God, but the concern of the brothers in Jerusalem is that you don't offend the Jewish neighbors and therefore that is my concern also.

Don't offend people in what you eat. Then Paul left and there were some teachers in Corinth who came up and said, Paul said we don't have to obey the things the Jerusalem

council said, including fornication. Didn't Paul say that we can more or less ignore those things as long as it's not offending people? And so Paul went back and clarified, wait, wait, wait, wait, I didn't say that about fornication.

I said this about what you eat. That's what he says there in 1 Corinthians 6. He's clarifying the food and the belly. That's one issue.

Those are, you know, those are temporary issues. They're not moral issues. But the body is not made for fornication, he says.

In other words, he's got to make a distinction that the Corinthians were failing to make. Both these things, fornication and the eating of certain foods were on the list from the Jerusalem council. What Paul had said apparently when he delivered those tended to diminish the sense of obligation about some of those things on the list.

And some teachers were taking that diminishing of responsibility and obligations to the whole list, including fornication. So Paul says, now, you're not discerning here between moral things and non-moral things. What you eat is not a moral issue.

Who you have sex with is a moral issue. And so that's what Paul goes into there. So it seems to me that Paul is wrestling with the Corinthians' failure to grasp the correct application of the Jerusalem council's requests.

But what is the correct use? The correct use, apparently, is the things that the Jerusalem council asks you not to eat. Don't eat them if they're going to offend people. But don't think that God really cares what you eat.

God doesn't care what you eat. God cares whether you love your neighbor or not. And offending your neighbor is not a loving thing to do.

And that's how Paul discusses it. If you read all of 1 Corinthians 8 through 10, that is his discussion, that's his argument. So it would seem that although we do have that one statement about eating blood coming from the Jerusalem council, Paul's own understanding of that probably would have been the same as eating meat specialized to idols, which was also on the same list.

The things that go into your stomach go out of your stomach. Don't worry about that. Now, by the way, there might be very good health reasons to avoid eating blood, but that's a different issue.

You see, we've got the Seventh-day Adventists who recommend that we do keep the dietary laws of Israel, but they're very much interested in the health issues of that, and there are health issues. If you eat a kosher diet, there's a good chance you might avoid some of the health problems that a more unrestrained diet would bring. Certainly we know that eating pork, if it's not properly cooked, can be very dangerous.

And clean and unclean foods, it has been argued, are not only ceremonially clean and unclean, but they also correspond with what's healthy for people to eat. And eating blood might be a very unhealthy thing, but it's not morally wrong, apparently. But in the Old Testament, one of the ways that human life was to be honored, or that life itself was to be honored, was to abstain from certain uses of blood.

One of those was the eating of animal blood. The other was, as we shall see, the shedding of human blood. In Genesis 9, 5, God continues, after he says not to eat the flesh with its blood in it, in Genesis 9, 5, God says, surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning.

That is to say, if someone kills you, I'm going to hold it against them, I'll demand some kind of retribution here. This had never been so before. Cain killed his brother and got away with it, more or less.

He got punished, but it was not life for life. Likewise, Cain's descendant, Lamech, had killed a man in self-defense, and it would appear that he also was not put to death. But now, God is establishing a principle, and once again, we have to ask if this continues into the New Testament also, because it says, surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning.

From the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of every man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of a man. Now what's that mean? God will require the life of a victim at the hands of its murderer, even if the murderer is an animal.

That's what he means when he says, I will demand it from the hand of every beast. That is, he'll require a penalty to be imposed on an animal if it kills a man. And this is actually brought out later on in the book of Exodus, as you know from reading it, in Exodus 21-28, if an ox gores a man and the man dies, the ox has to be put to death.

Now it's not so much that the ox is morally responsible, that ox probably would have been put to death anyway as food later on, but the idea here is that there is to be a practice of honoring human life, so that if an animal kills a human, even though the animal is not morally responsible, it doesn't get away with it. I mean, after all, if a man killed a human and was killed for it, and an animal killed a man and wasn't killed for it, it's almost like the animal is being treated more leniently than the man who is a murderer. The point is that no one can kill a human being, man or beast, if they do, they will be put to death.

I believe in one of the zoos in Australia they have a crocodile that is said to have eaten a policeman, I think, from what I was told when I was over there. I didn't go to the zoo, didn't see it, but I heard they have a very large crocodile that is said to have eaten a policeman. That crocodile should have been put to death.

Instead it's on display. But, you know, they say, well, crocodiles will be crocodiles, you know, what do you expect? Well, oxen will be oxen too, and if they gore a man and kill him, that's their life. Because God honors human life, that's what is being said here.

And he says he'll require the lifeblood from, he means from the victim, from the hand of every beast and from the hand of every man. And then that last line, from the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. It might just be a way of saying that all men are brothers and therefore, you know, if you kill one of your brothers, I'm going to require it of you.

Or it might be saying that the brother of the deceased is the one who bears the responsibility for carrying out the execution of the murderer. Whether this is saying that or not, that did come to be the practice. In ancient society they had what they called the avenger of blood.

If I was murdered by you, my brother then was obligated to go find you and kill you. Someone had to, and they didn't have complex court systems and jail systems and criminal justice systems. So this kind of thing was handled by the family.

And you find later on when the law of Moses is given that God set up certain cities of refuge where a person who accidentally killed somebody could flee from the avenger of blood. The avenger of blood would have been the nearest relative of the deceased who would be coming after you. And those cities were not there for cold-blooded or premeditated murderers, those cities were for people who accidentally killed someone.

It was accidental involuntary manslaughter. The example is given if you're swinging an axe to cut wood, the axe flies off, hits someone else in the head and kills him. Well, you didn't intend that.

But you still can't just go on with your life because a man has been killed at your hands even though accidentally. But you don't deserve to die because it was an accident. So you could flee to a city of refuge and there you could be kept alive and the avenger of blood would not be allowed to come and kill you.

Interesting way to handle these situations. But the point here is that the assumption is there is somebody who has to kill you if you kill someone else. And the natural avenger of blood would be someone from the family of the victim.

And that seems to be, in my opinion, with that last line, from the hand of every man's brother, I will require the life of a man. Then he says this, whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God, he made man.

And as for you, be fruitful and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it. So here we have obviously the first reference to capital punishment, although it's not assumed that there is a state system in place to execute. There are family clans that

must take care of this.

Eventually governments were formed and magistrates and communities took care of this. Either through executioners or through community action. You know, the whole community stones someone to death because they deserve it.

But the point here is that a man who is a murderer should be put to death. And you know, many conservative Christians, myself included, believe that capital punishment is a just penalty for certain crimes. I mean, I don't feel like I'd like to kill anyone.

I don't feel like I'd like anyone to die, even a murderer. I don't wish it on anyone. But it's from my study of the scripture, I think that God's opinion is that man's life is valuable because man is made in the image of God.

And if somebody takes it lightly and kills someone who's in the image of God, it is a great sacrilege. And I mean, people were put to death for lesser sacrilegious than that. What we might consider lesser, you know, gathering sticks on the Sabbath, we would probably consider less sacrilegious than murder.

But people were put to death for that too. But we don't do that anymore because the Sabbath law is not the law of our land. It's not a universal law.

It was a covenant between God and Israel. But this is a covenant made with all mankind, with Noah and his descendants, and that includes everybody. And so some people feel that it is inconsistent for us to be pro-capital punishment, if you happen to be.

It's possible that some people here are not. And you know, you have to work it out yourself. When I was younger, I was against capital punishment too.

You know, I take into consideration when Jesus said about the woman taking adultery, whoever has not sinned, let him cast the first stone at her, seemed to be not permitting her to be executed, though she had committed a capital crime. On the other hand, of course, I didn't realize until I read it more closely that Jesus was saying that capital punishment was the correct punishment for her. The question is who's authorized or who's qualified.

He said, let the one who is without sin be the first to cast the stone at her. Presumably he could have done it. He was without sin, but he said to her, I don't condemn you.

So he was not a magistrate. He was not there to punish criminals, but there are magistrates who are there to punish criminals. Paul said so in Romans chapter 13.

He said that God has ordained magistrates, government officials, to punish criminals. And he says, you should be, you should beware then of the magistrate. You should be aware to keep the laws because he does not bear the sword for nothing.

And we have to remember that when Jesus talked about loving your enemy and turning the other cheek, he was telling his disciples how they should live. He wasn't going to the courthouse and telling the judges to turn the other cheek and forgive all the criminals and just let them walk. There still is a place for civil government.

There still is a place, although Christians must forgive their enemies and Christians should never, well, I shouldn't say Christians should never, I would say that some Christians would disagree with this statement, but the early Christians believed that no Christian should ever be an executioner. The early Christians believed that no Christian should fight in war. The early Christians believed that Christians should not be policemen because they felt like that's not the policeman's or the Christian's assignment.

It is the Christian's assignment to love and to extend mercy and to show grace. But they also taught that it is the government's assignment to do those things. There are times when war is the only way to protect a society from invasion.

There's time when criminals, if they are not punished, will become a menace to society and God has ordained governments to do that, not Christians. That's what the early Christians thought. Of course, that got them baffled and confused once the government became Christian.

In Constantine's day, you know, the emperor becomes Christian, suddenly you've got an overlap between magistrates and Christians, you know, the government is Christian. But for the first three centuries, the governments were anti-Christian, so it was easy for the Christians to see the difference in the magisterium. The magisterium of the Christians was mercy and grace to sinners.

The magisterium of the government was penalties to criminals. And you say, well, what about now? What if a Christian is a judge? What if a Christian is an executioner? But then, well, I can't address that. I mean, not simply and quickly and satisfactorily.

It's possible the early Christians were right, that Christians should not be in that role. But there are other Christians who think that they should, because they say if it's moral for a judge or a policeman or a soldier to do something that the average Christian citizen shouldn't do, if it's moral for a non-Christian soldier to do it, then why should it be immoral for a Christian to do it? And so there's a lot of discussion. I've been a part of it.

I've spoken for hours and hours on the subject of war and Christians in government and things like that without really resolving the whole issue, because it's complex. So I would say work on it, but don't expect me to resolve it for you right here. The point is that while I would never be able to be an executioner, probably not even a soldier, because as a Christian, I don't wish ill on anybody, even my enemies, yet I have to say that God has ordained that people who do certain criminal behaviors, especially murderers, are to be dealt with by someone.

And that the New Testament says the government is what God has ordained to do that. And as far as the Christian's involvement in government, that's an ethical issue that can be discussed. Some say yea, some say nay.

But here we see that there is still penalties for sin. Now, when people say, well, we shouldn't kill murderers today because, well, there's a lot of reasons they get. One is that a lot of innocent people are found guilty wrongfully.

And there are men on death row who would have been put to death, but now DNA testing has proven they were innocent and they had to be released, and thank God they weren't killed. Yes, thank God they weren't killed. Amen.

Therefore, the court systems have to be better at deciding who's guilty and who's not guilty. The question we're asking is not how good are the courts at deciding who deserves what? The question is, what does an actual murder really deserve? If a man has been found to be a murderer and is guilty in fact, and by the correct court procedures has been proven beyond question to be a murderer, in the Bible that required two or three witnesses who had to see him have committed crime. If that's the case, then what does he deserve? Some say, well, we're more civilized than ancient people.

We give life imprisonment to murderers. Well, how is that really better? Well, we don't kill them that way. No, but you take their life anyway.

You take their life and leave them alive and let the society support them. So here's the person who victimized society by killing innocent people, and now innocent people get to pay the bills to support him for the rest of his life without him working. That's real nice.

Is that justice? It might sound merciful, but is it just? The courts are not supposed to do merciful things. Christians are. The courts are supposed to do just things.

That's what justice means. And according to scripture, justice includes capital punishment for some crimes. Is that true in the New Testament as well? It would appear to be.

Not only did Paul make suggestions of that sort in Romans 13, where he said that God has ordained the state to avenge evil on unbelievers, although a few verses earlier, Paul said that Christians should not avenge themselves. See, in Romans 12, speaking to Christians about their responsibility, he says in verse 17 of Romans 12, Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things inside of all men.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. But do not avenge yourselves. So we're not supposed to avenge ourselves.

But notice in chapter 13, just a few verses later, he says, Let 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. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God.

And those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For 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'll have praise from the same.

For he, the ruler, is God's servant. That's what minister means. The word minister means servant.

He is God's servant to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. In vain.

He is God's servant and avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. So Paul says to the Christian, Don't avenge yourselves. But he says, But realize that God has appointed a servant of his to avenge, to be an executioner of vengeance.

It's not you. It's not the Christian. It's not the body of Christ.

It is, in fact, the government officials. And so we see that Paul seems to believe that the government officials do have a responsibility in this area that Christians don't necessarily get involved in. At least in his day they did not.

Some people say, But if Christians don't get involved in the court system and the legal system and all that, then it will be left over to pagans, and then we'll have an unjust system. Well, if you believe that all pagans are unjust, that's true. I do think that there have been some societies that had just rulers and just judges that were not Christian.

It is true, many non-Christians are unjust, and I would not be in favor of electing them to office or appointing them as judges. But if you can find a moral individual, then maybe it doesn't matter if he's a Christian or not, as long as he's just. But I always bring this up when people ask about the New Testament and capital punishment, because Paul, again, expresses his own opinion with reference to his own case in Acts, chapter 25, where Paul is on trial for his life before a Roman judge.

He's being falsely accused, so he's an innocent man, being falsely accused by the Jewish leaders. His judge is a Roman judge, and Paul is protesting his innocence. But in the course of doing so, in Acts 25, 11, Paul says, For if I am an offender or have committed anything worthy of death, in other words, if I've committed a crime, that's a capital crime, I do not object to dying.

So Paul's making it very clear, in principle, I'm not raising any objection to the phenomenon of capital punishment when it is deserved. But he goes on to say, But I don't deserve it. I didn't do any of these things that they said I did, so I'm not going to let

you put me to death.

I'm going to appeal to Caesar instead. And so, I mean, Paul's words, he could have left that part out if he didn't mean it. But apparently he did mean it.

He said, I don't object to you putting me to death, if I've done something that is worthy of death. How could I object to that? I'm for justice here. And that's the thing, when people say, How can you Christians be pro-life, or call yourself pro-life because you don't believe in abortion, but you then believe in killing murderers? How is that pro-life? Well, the truth of the matter is, for many years, I've kind of objected to the term pro-life as a description of my position.

I'd rather say pro-justice. I'm against abortion because it's an injustice to kill an innocent party, and a baby is an innocent party. But I'm for capital punishment because it's not an injustice to kill a murderer.

In fact, it's an injustice not to. The Jews believe that if a man kills another man, and the man who killed him is not himself but to death, that the society is disrespecting the value of the life of the man who is treating the murderer as if his life is more valuable than the man whose life he took. The Bible, in the law of Moses, has an exact justice model.

An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, stripe for stripe, burn for burn, stroke for stroke, life for life. That's the code in the law. Now, some would say, Didn't Jesus change that? Didn't Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount, You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for tooth.

But I say to you, Do not resist the evil man. Turn the other cheek. Give to him who asks you.

If he wants to sue you, give him more. Jesus did say that, but what does it mean? Was Jesus going to the judges at the courthouse and saying, Listen, when the criminals have brought you, just turn the other cheek. Just send it out.

You need to not resist the evil man. No, he wasn't talking to magistrates about their duty. He never did.

Jesus never went to the courts in Israel and said, Here's how you need to change your criminal justice procedures. He never did. He's talking to his disciples, who are his followers, saying, You have heard people say that if someone hits you and knocks out your eye, you should knock out their eye.

You've heard that. But I say, Don't do that. If someone injures you, absorb the injury.

You don't have to press charges. Now, if you took them to the courts, a guy who knocks

your eye out, you take him to the court, that guy gets his eye knocked out. But you can turn the other cheek, turn the other eye, as it were.

In other words, you can refrain from pressing charges. You can refrain from retaliation. That's exactly what Paul said.

My brethren, do not avenge yourselves. But he said in the next few verses, because God has given the government that task to avenge. So Jesus, when he said, Don't resist the evil man, he's not talking to the judges and the policemen.

I mean, imagine what society would be if Jesus had done that, if Jesus had gone to all the policemen, all the judges and said, Listen, you might as well close the courts down, just let the criminals run around free. That's not what he had in mind. Jesus had in mind that his disciples learn how to love their enemies and do good to those who persecute them and all of that, and not think that the law which was given to instruct the magistrates about proper penalties, an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, that's instructive.

That's like when a judge has to look up in the law books, you know, what the penalty is for a certain crime. Oh, there it is right there. This guy did that, and he gets this.

That law is given to the magistrates to govern their sentencing. It is not given to private individuals. But in Jesus' time, apparently private individuals just took that as their code, too.

You hurt me, I'll hurt you. And Jesus says, Christians, you don't have to do that. In fact, you shouldn't do that.

Don't hurt them back. You can be hurt without needing to hurt somebody back. Don't avenge yourself.

So it is entirely possible to have a sermon on the law of ethic where you would not injure another person. You would not avenge yourself of a wrong, but still be, like Paul, in principle, favorable toward the idea that when someone commits a crime, the judges are there to give them a just penalty, not an unjust penalty. And what is a just penalty? Well, how in the world do we know? But by turning to God.

God's law, although we are not under the law, Paul says, I know that the law is holy and just and good. He's talking about the Jewish law. So if the law is holy and just and good, then it seems like a good code for governments to go by, because they're supposed to do what's just.

Christians sometimes are to forego justice in favor of mercy. The courts aren't authorized to do that. That's not what they're there for.

All right. Well, let's take a break here, and we'll take the rest of Chapter 9 when we come

back.