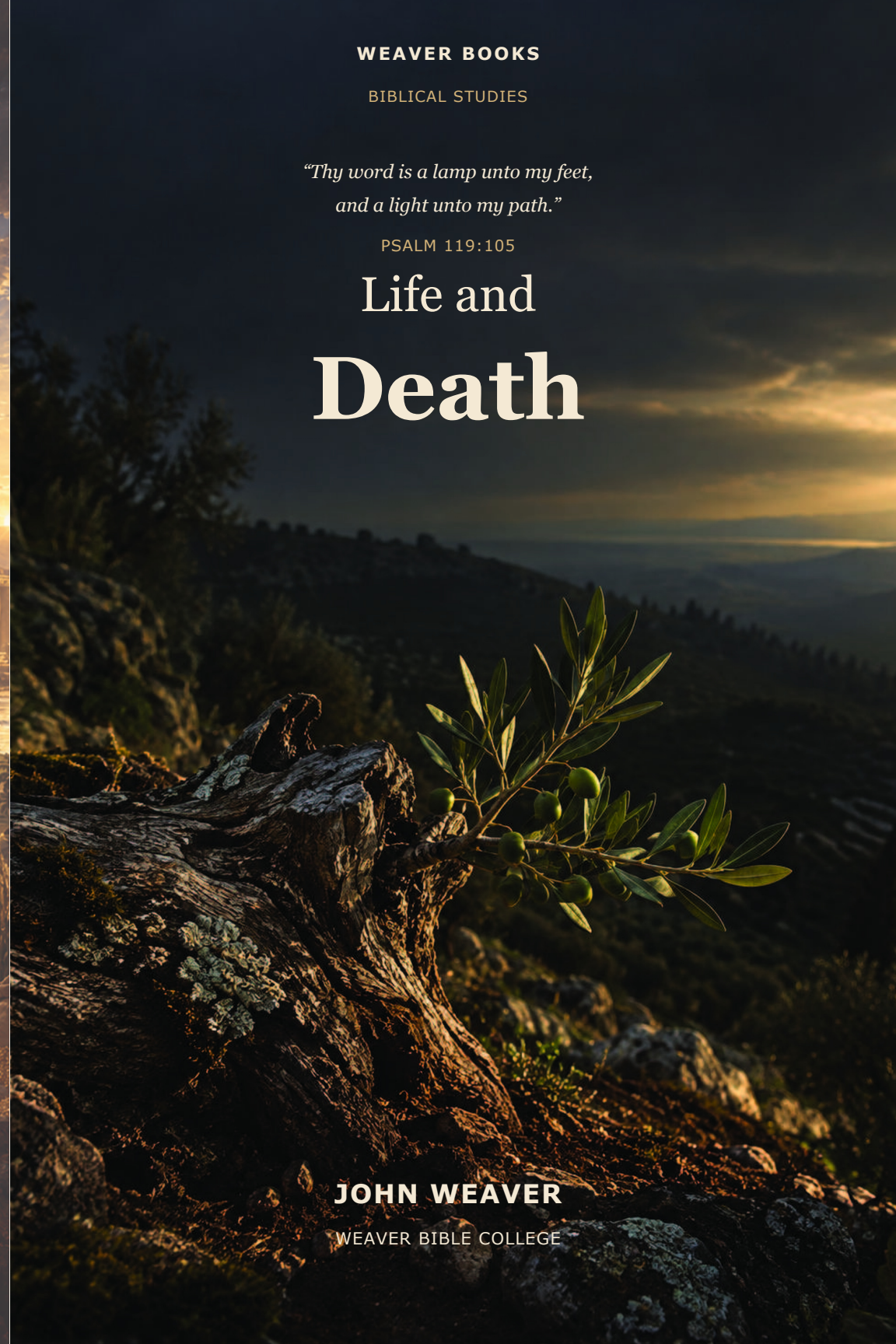
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“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.”

PSALM 119:105

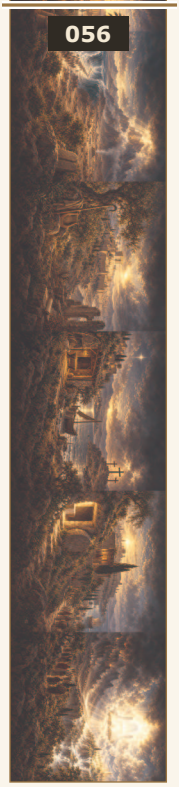
Life and Death



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE





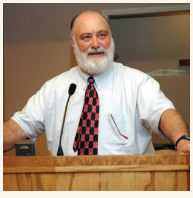
I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life.

DEUTERONOMY 30:19, EXCERPT

Life and death belong to God's sovereign government. John Weaver examines obedience, judgment, the continuing moral authority of God's law, and the difference between its curse and its rightful demands. These messages urge careful interpretation and remind readers that God's justice and goodness must be considered together.

"We must learn to biblically fear God: to fear Him biblically is to understand that He is the God of life and death; life and death are in His hands."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Life and Death

Part One of Two

God's Sovereignty Over Life and Death

In Deuteronomy 32:39, God says, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me. I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal. Neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.” The Word of God tells us that to God alone belong the issues of life and death. It is God who gives life, and it is God who takes life. Life and death are always on His terms and not on ours.

Scripture teaches that He has appointed our bounds as well as our times. In Job 14:1, the Bible says, “Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.” In verse 5 it says, “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.” God tells us up front that our days are determined and our months are appointed. He has determined our boundaries so that we cannot pass them. Therefore, in Job 7:1, the Scripture asks, “Is there not an appointed time for man upon the earth? Are not his days like the days of a hireling?” Again, Scripture teaches that we have an appointed time.

Death is in the hands of God alone. No man can die apart from God's sovereign will and authority. In fact, the very fact that Jesus Christ gave up His life willingly when He did demonstrates that He is God alone, for no man can die on his own.

You may say, "Well, I can die whenever I want to. I'll kill myself." No. That does not mean you are going to die when you think you are going to die. I personally know of a young man who came home from Vietnam, found that his wife had been unfaithful, took a shotgun, put it right under his chin, and pulled the trigger. He did not die until a week later. He thought he would die instantly, but he did not. God has ordained the time of our death. You cannot go beyond His time, nor can you die before His time.

The Prohibition Against Unlawful Taking of Life

He is in control, and not you. Man cannot take life, including his own, without being guilty of murder. God has commanded, "Thou shalt not kill." This prohibition includes taking one's own life. In some states, the law still reflects the Christian principle that attempted suicide is attempted murder and therefore a criminal offense. Life can only be taken on God's terms, not man's terms. The power to kill and to take life is under the law of God. We may not take life unlawfully.

According to the Bible, God has given the civil magistrate the power of the sword. If you read Romans 13, you will find that. Some time ago I preached on the biblical doctrine of self-defense and gave you nineteen reasons from the Bible why life may be lawfully and legitimately taken. One of those reasons was self-defense, or defending the life of someone else. There are also just wars that are commenced and commanded in the Bible, and during those wars life may be lawfully taken as well.

I am going to enunciate that principle more fully next week. But today I want you to understand that God is the giver, the author, and the sustainer of life. It should be evident that life should be lived on God's terms. He ordained life, and He is the one who established our parameters. If we want the most out of life, we must live it in light of God's law.

God's Law as Life, Not Restraint

God's law is not a restraint upon life; it is life. I do not mean that God's law actually gives real life. I will explain it. Look in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 3 and verse 21. Paul asks concerning the law of God, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" Then he says, "God forbid"—that is, perish the thought. Do not even let it enter your mind that God's law is somehow against the promises of God. He says, "For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, then verily righteousness should have been by the law." Very obviously, if there had been a law that could give us eternal life, Christ would not have needed to come and suffer and die.

But the law cannot give eternal life like that. But I am going to explain what I mean when I say that God's law is life. Since God has given us life—physical, spiritual, mental, and every other kind of life—all life is to be regulated and controlled by His law.

What we hear from the average pulpit today is this: “We're not under law, we're under grace.” The truth of the matter is, we're under both. We are under grace as a means of salvation and justification, and we are under law as a means of direction and sanctification. God's grace, the gospel of Jesus Christ, does not do away with God's law.

Paul was the greatest preacher on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. He began his teaching on justification by faith alone in Romans chapter 3 and does not end it until the end of Romans chapter 8. Thus, Romans 3 through Romans 8 presents his doctrine of justification by faith alone. As he begins teaching this doctrine, he asks, “Do we then make void the law through faith?” His answer is, “God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

The Law Established by Faith, Not Voided

We may conclude, therefore, that any teaching of the gospel that nullifies, abrogates, or sets aside the law of God is another gospel. For in Romans 3:31, Paul says that justification by faith alone establishes the law of God.

Do you remember our Lord's words in Matthew 5:17–18? “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not

come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." The word "fulfilled" literally means to put into full force as continuous. Our Lord said, "I did not come to destroy the law or the prophets. I came to fulfil. I came to put it into full force as continuous."

Paul is still teaching on justification by faith alone when he says in Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good."

And so he says in verse 12, Romans 7, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Now ask yourself, if the law is holy, just, and good, why would God nullify it? Why would God abrogate it? Why would God set it aside? Why would God do away with it? You have to ask yourself another question. If the law of God has been abrogated, nullified, set aside, done away with, why does God write His law on our hearts in the New Covenant?

Hebrews 8:10 says, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." So if the law has been done away with, why is God writing it in our minds, and why is God writing it in our hearts?

In 2 Corinthians 3:3, the apostle says concerning Christians in the new covenant, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." What is the Apostle Paul saying? I preached a whole series of messages on 2 Corinthians 3 some time ago, but he is saying that we are the epistle, we are the letters of God, and His law is written in our hearts by the Spirit of God. In this context, Paul talks about the law written in stone being the ministration of death. He talks about the law written in our hearts being the ministration of life.

He teaches us that the ministration of death, when God wrote His law in stone, was glorious. But now He teaches that His law written in our hearts is more glorious. In 2 Corinthians 3:7-8, it is plainly

stated: “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” It was not the law that was to be done away with; it was the glory. “For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.” The ministration of righteousness is writing the law in our hearts. He says in verse 10, “For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”

God's law written in our hearts is far more glorious than that which was written in stone. According to the apostle Paul, it was not the law that was done away with; it was the method of writing the law that was done away with. In time past, God wrote it in stone. Now, in the new covenant, God writes it in the fleshly tables of the heart. It is the same law. The law has not been done away with; only the method has been changed.

The Necessity of the Law for Knowing Sin and Salvation

Now, let me show you how absolutely needed and necessary the law is. This is Paul's argument of justification by faith. He has already said, “Do we make void the law of God through preaching justification by faith alone?” And the answer is, “God forbid.” No, he says, we establish the law. Yet from the average pulpit, you hear that the law has been done away with: “We're not under law. We're under grace.” Let me make a statement, and I want you to think very seriously about it: If the law has been done away with, as most preachers teach—

“There is no such thing as sin.” Look in Romans 3:20 at what the Apostle Paul argues: “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” What? By the law is the knowledge of sin. It is only by God’s law that we know what is right and what is wrong, what is righteous and what is unrighteous, what is holy and what is unholy.

In Romans 7:7, the Apostle Paul gives his own personal testimony and speaks of the spirituality of the law: “What shall we say then? Is

the law sin?" "God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

Now understand what the Apostle Paul is saying. In verse 8 he says, "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead." Watch verse 9: "For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." What is Paul talking about? He was alive once without the law. Remember, Paul was a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

You can read his pedigree in Philippians chapter 3. What did the Pharisees think? They believed that they kept the law because they had reduced it to externals. Paul said that, as a Pharisee, he had his own righteousness according to the law. He thought he was perfect. But when the commandment came—that is, when he saw the true spirituality of the law—he said, "Sin revived, and I died."

In other words, he found out he was a sinner. He said, "I didn't even know what sin was, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" It is not only reaching out and stealing that makes someone a thief. If I covet Doc's red jacket, I am still a thief whether I take it or not. Moreover, Scripture tells us that covetousness is idolatry.

The point is very simple: if you do not have the law, you do not have sin. The Bible tells us in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." You cannot sin without violating God's law. If you do away with the law of God, you do away with sin. How can we know what is right and wrong, or what sin is, without the law of God?

How can anyone be convicted of sin if he does not know what sin is? How can preaching authoritatively declare right and wrong if the law has been done away with? It is God's law, and its application by the Holy Spirit, that convicts men of sin. The apostle Paul taught us that it is only through knowledge of the law that we know what sin actually is.

If you do away with the law, you do away with sin. If you do away with the law, you do away with salvation. If God's law has been

nullified, abrogated, set aside, or is no more, not only is there no sin, there is no salvation. You say, “What?”

How can that possibly be true? Because our salvation is by Christ and in Christ alone. So how can it be said that without the law there is no salvation? The Puritans used to have a saying: “The sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel.” You have to be convicted of your sin before you ever desire the gospel of Jesus Christ. The sharp needle of the law must precede the scarlet thread of the gospel.

Galatians 3:24 shows how that statement is true. If the law of God has been done away with, there is no salvation. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The law is our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. What does a schoolmaster do? It teaches. A schoolmaster is one that teaches. Does the law teach us? Oh, yes. There are a number of things that we have to be taught by the law if we are going to be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ. What are some of the things the law has to teach us?

First of all, the law teaches us that we are sinners. It teaches us that we have disobeyed, fallen short, rebelled, transgressed God's law, and sinned. That is the very first thing the law teaches us: “For whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.”

Secondly, the law teaches us that we are helpless and hopeless in and of ourselves. It teaches us that we cannot save ourselves. The law demands three things from every individual: personal obedience, perfect obedience, and perpetual obedience. None of us has ever rendered to the law that which it demands. If you were able to get perfect today and never sin again for the rest of your life, would that make you saved? No. What about all those sins you committed before you got perfect? The law teaches us not only that we are sinners, but also that we are helpless and hopeless in and of ourselves and cannot save ourselves, because we cannot give to the law that which it demands: personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.

Thirdly, the law teaches us that there is a vast chasm between a holy God and a wicked, rebellious sinner. We are not even in the

same ballpark. God is infinitely holy, majestically and marvelously righteous and just, and here we are, sinners. How can we approach Him? We cannot.

The law teaches us not only that we are sinners and cannot save ourselves, but also that if we get to God, it must be through a mediator, a go-between, or, as Job calls him, a daysman. The Bible tells us very clearly that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. So the law teaches us that we need a mediator.

Fourthly, the law teaches us that if we are to be saved, we have to be saved by the merits of another, because we have no merits and cannot acquire any. We cannot give to the law that which it demands. Thus, according to the Apostle Paul, the law is our schoolmaster. It drives us to Christ, so that we might be justified by faith alone.

If you do away with the law of God, there is no sin and there is no salvation. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. God's law does indeed have a role in our salvation. Moreover, it also has a role in our sanctification. We are under God's law as a means of direction and sanctification.

The Law's Role in Sanctification and Pleasing God

The Holy Spirit, who is the agent in sanctification, always leads and guides us in obedience to the law of God. The leading of the Holy Spirit does not abrogate the Word of God. The Holy Spirit never leads us contrary to the Word of God; He always leads us in conformity to it. God's law is simply the expression of His will for our lives. Those who think that the law of God has no part in their Christian lives are exceedingly deceived.

It is this exact point upon which the gospel of grace actually hinges. Before our conversion, before our regeneration, we did not have the ability to please God. We were absolutely, totally depraved and without power and without ability. Look in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8, verses 7 and 8:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Now here is my question: How many people who are unsaved have the ability to please God? None. The word enmity is a strong word for hatred. The carnal mind is hatred against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

What is Paul's argument in Romans chapter 8? We who are saved are no longer in the flesh; we are in the Spirit. That means that, in our conversion, we now have the ability to please God. We also have the ability to displease God. Before our conversion, the only thing we had was the ability to displease Him and hate Him. Now we have the ability to please Him as well as displease Him.

Look in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1 and verse 10. Paul tells these Colossian Christians, “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Now we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. In Christ, we now have the ability to please God. Look in Colossians 3 and verse 20. Watch carefully.

“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.” I want you to note what is well pleasing to the Lord in Colossians 3:20: obeying His law, which is the fifth commandment, “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Since we have been converted, we now have the ability to please God. God does not leave us guessing as to how we please Him, nor does He leave us guessing as to what pleases Him.

First John 3:22 says, “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” What is pleasing in His sight? Keeping His commandments. Isn’t that amazing? First John 5:3 says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” I am just telling you what is pleasing to God.

You see, before our conversion, we had no ability to please God. Now, after our conversion, we do have the ability to please God. I am trying to point out that holiness and sanctification are determined by God and His law. Holiness, sanctification, and that which pleases God consist in keeping His law.

Now let me ask you, how can anyone possibly believe that they are sanctified and holy while living in fornication, adultery, and rebellion? How can a constant and consistent liar be considered a holy or sanctified person? How could someone who is a constant and continual thief be considered holy? You see what I am saying? Holiness and sanctification involve pleasing God. How is God pleased? When we keep His law. Does God want us to please Him? Yes. How do we please Him? By obeying His law, because His law is an expression of His will for our lives.

Now there is a question that has to be asked: If all this is true—and it is—how do we explain those negative passages in the New Testament concerning the law of God? There are some negative passages in the New Testament concerning God's law. This is where most people get confused. You have to remember two things.

Explaining Negative New Testament Passages on the Law

Scripture does not contradict Scripture. There is always an immediate context and a remote context. Furthermore, everything must be interpreted in the analogy of faith—that is, in light of the whole teaching of God's Word. If your interpretation of any Scripture contradicts any other plain teaching of Scripture, the Scripture is not wrong; your interpretation is wrong.

With that in mind, consider this from the Bible. If you consider the context, the remote context, and the analogy of faith, you will find that every negative passage concerning the law in the New Testament can be explained very easily and very simply in three ways. First, there are passages of Scripture that deny the law as our standard for justification. We read one of them in Romans 3:20: "For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

There are passages in the New Testament that speak negatively concerning the law because they deny the law as our standard and means of justification. God has never given His law as a standard for justification. God has never given His law as a means of salvation. You cannot work your way into heaven. You cannot save yourself. You cannot help save yourself. You cannot give to the law that which

it demands: personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Hence, in the New Testament, there are a multitude of passages that deny the law as a means of justification.

Romans 3 through Romans 8 is Paul's argument on justification by faith alone. Therefore, we should very obviously find negative passages concerning the law as a means of justification. In Romans 6:14, the apostle Paul says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” That is, as a means of justification. “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” Remember, the context is justification by faith alone.

In verse 14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you.” Why? “For ye are not under the law,” that is, as a standard of justification, “but under grace.”

Now note what he is saying, especially in verse 15: “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law?” What is sin? Remember 1 John 3 and verse 4: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” If the law has been done away with, if that is what the apostle Paul is arguing, how can he be talking about sinning against the law in verse 15, when he says we are not under the law in verse 14? Very obviously, he is not talking about the law being done away with. He is talking about the fact that we are not under the law as a standard for justification. So when he says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you,” sin shall not reign over you; it shall not have kingship over you. Why? “For ye are not under the law.” What does the law demand?

It demands personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. Who can give it to the law? None of us. Not one. And so sin comes along and says, “You’re mine. You can’t give the law that personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. I’ll reign over you. You will do what I tell you.” No, it cannot condemn us because the law is not our standard for justification. Grace is our standard for justification.

Paul begins his argument in Romans chapter 3 and does not end it until Romans chapter 8. He tells us that we are not under the law as a standard for justification. We continually sin and fall short, yet the

law cannot condemn us. Why? Because it is not our standard. Grace is our standard. Now, the very fact that we are not under the law as a standard of justification does not give us the right to sin. That is what Paul said. “We’re under grace. We can go out and do what we want to do. We can be whoremongers, liars, thieves, murderers, and thefts.” No, no, no. He said you cannot do that. God forbid. Perish the thought. That is not what he is teaching.

These passages speak negatively concerning the law because they deny the law as a means of justification by faith. Notice what the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:16: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

You try to tell me how good you are and how much you obey God, and how that is going to get you into heaven. The Apostle Paul says, you are deceived. You are not going to heaven. For by the works of the law shall no man be justified. God has never given the law as a standard for justification, period. So there are passages that negate the law as our standard for justification.

Secondly, there are passages in the Bible that refer to what I am going to call the death-dealing nature of sin in relationship to the law. What happens when we violate God's law? We are under its curse and under a penalty. There is a death-dealing nature of the law in relationship to sin: “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” As Christians, we have been redeemed from the curse and the penalty of the law. We are not under the death-dealing nature of the law.

Galatians 3:10 says, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.” As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse. There is a curse attached to the law.

The law demands a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience. If you do not give the law that which it demands, there is a curse upon

you. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

When the apostle Paul says that we have been freed from the law, he is not talking about being freed from obedience. He is talking about being freed from its curse, from its penalty. In Galatians 2:19-20, Paul says, “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” What does Paul mean when he says, “I through the law am dead to the law”?

Suppose I shot and killed a man, was found guilty of murder, and sentenced to die in the electric chair. Before the execution, however, I died of a heart attack. Since I am dead, are they going to put me in the electric chair and fry me? How can they? I am dead. Their punishment is worthless, useless, null, and void. This illustrates what Paul meant when he said, “I’m dead to the law.” The curse and penalty of the law do not apply to Christians, because Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. We are not fearful of that death, for Christ has suffered in our stead.

Thus, the negative passages concerning the law include, first, those that deny the law as a means of justification; second, those that refer to the death-dealing nature of sin in the law; and third, those that refer to the ceremonial law that has been fulfilled. For instance, look in Ephesians 2, beginning at verse 13, through verse 16.

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”

Now, go back to verse 15: “Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” So many people say, “Christ took the law out of the way. He nailed it to the cross.” No, he did not take the law and nail it to the cross. He took care of the curse and the penalty, but he has not taken God’s law as a whole and nailed it to the cross. He took out, the Bible says, the commandments contained in ordinances. He did not abolish the commandments; it does not say that. He abolished the commandments that related to ordinances—those around the tabernacle and temple worship.

Why did he take out those ordinances? Because they were types and shadows; they were not reality. In the Old Testament, if you worshiped God, you had to bring an animal as a sacrifice, come to the tabernacle or temple, and come to the priest. We never bring an animal for sacrifice because the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7, “For Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” We no longer need a sacrifice. Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice; he is the Son of God. We no longer come to a tabernacle or a temple.

Our Lord said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." But this he spake of the temple of his body (John 2:21). We no longer need a tabernacle or a temple, because Jesus Christ is our temple.

We no longer need the showbread. Why? Jesus said in John 6:48, "I am the bread of life." We have the real bread. We no longer need the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood, because Jesus Christ is our great High Priest. The Bible says in Hebrews 4:14–15, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Jesus Christ is our High Priest. Everything around those tabernacle and temple ceremonies were just types and shadows. They were not reality. In Christ we have reality. Hebrews 8:4–5 says, "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he,

that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

"But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah."

The tabernacle and the temple are shadows. Shadows.

Would anybody in this room be so naive—I wanted to say stupid, but I didn't—as to stand outside in the shadow of that pecan tree and proclaim that you're in the pecan tree? The shadow is not the real. The pecan tree is the real, right? The tabernacle and the temple were shadows. They were patterns. The reality is in heaven. You would look at that temple and say, "Boy, that's real." No, that was not real. Reality is in the heavens. It was merely the shadow.

Hebrews 9:23 says, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." He is talking about the tabernacle and the temple. Then, in verse 24: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

The tabernacle and the temple were only figures. Hebrews 10:1 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect." He is talking about the ceremonial law. Isn't that amazing? Even the ceremonial law has not been done away with; it has been fulfilled. We now have the reality. We still have the high priest, the sacrifice, and the temple, but it is all Jesus Christ, because all those things shadowed Jesus Christ. God has not cast away His law. If you postulate a change in God's law, then you must also postulate a change in God.

True Liberty Found in Obedience to God's Law

For a king rules by his law. God is immutable, and therefore His law is immutable.

All that I have said thus far has been introduction; here is the message. God's law has not been done away with. God's law is liberty; it is freedom. Liberty is not an escape from law, but true liberty is found in submission to God's law. In James 1:25, God's law is called “the perfect law of liberty,” and in James 2:12, “the law of liberty.”

The world thinks, If I can just get out from under this law, I'll have liberty. If it were not for God's law, goodness, I could have forty wives and one hundred concubines and as many women as I wanted. Do you think that's liberty? Try supporting them. You're a slave. Or, If I could just get out from under “Thou shalt not steal,” I could get everything I wanted.

So the world says that if we can break out of God's law, we can have real liberty and freedom. No, no, no. Outside God's law, there will be death and destruction. Liberty and freedom are found only under God's law.

Interestingly enough, Rushdoony said years ago that many of these sheikhs who had big harems were really, really enslaved, because each night he went to a different wife. He had to brag upon her, her meal, and her prowess. If he did not brag upon her and elevate her above all the other wives, she was angry and upset. Rushdoony pointed out that most of these sheikhs ended up poisoned by their own wives because they were upset that he did not brag upon them, and so forth. Instead of being liberty, it turned out to be death.

God's law is real liberty. Outside of God's law is death and destruction. Fish were created to live in the water. Water is the boundary, environment, and limit of a fish's life. When you liberate a fish from water, it dies. Freeing the fish from the limitations and boundaries God has ordained for it is not freedom and liberation; it is death.

God created birds to fly in the air. The air is the limit, boundary, and environment God created for the bird. If you free that bird from the air and plunge it beneath the water, it is not liberty; it is death. Trees were created by God to grow in the soil. It is their boundary, limit, and environment. You liberate a tree from the soil and pluck it up by the roots; it is not freedom for the tree. It is death. Likewise, man was created to live in obedience to God.

The rules, regulations, and statutes of that obedience are revealed in God's law. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

When an individual, family, church, society, or nation removes itself from God and God's law, it is not an act of freedom and liberation. It is an act of death and destruction. It is true individually, familially, ecclesiastically, and nationally. Life has been ordained by God. He is the author and giver of life. God's law regulates our life; it is our life and the condition of our life. God is the sole ground of life's continuation. Since He gave us life, He has the absolute right to tell us how to live it and what is holy and what is not holy. His law is life, and outside of that law is death.

Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 6, and hold that place because we are going to come back to it. Then turn to Deuteronomy chapter 30. In Deuteronomy 6, look at verse 1:

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.”

Remember, life and death is in God’s hands. Now look at Deuteronomy 30, beginning with verse 10 and reading through verse 16. See how God describes setting His law before us:

“If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of

the law, and if thou turn unto the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply. And the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it."

Note that God said it is the law of life and good, or death and evil: life and good if we obey, death and evil if we disobey.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." What did He say? He said, choose life.

"And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us."

Is God's law against us? No. It is for our good. He wants to preserve us alive. He said, "I set before you life and death. I set before you blessing and cursing." We are not to be presumptuous. The sin of presumption is when one takes to himself power and authority for which he has no right or warrant to do. When we set aside God's law and endeavor to live according to what we think best, we have committed the sin of presumption. David prayed in Psalm 19, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." A

presumptuous sin is when we presume that we have the right and authority to declare what is right and wrong, holy and unholy, and do whatever we think. God says, No, you better choose life, because away from His law is only death.

It is true that we have been freed from the traditions, rules, and regulations of men. But we are not free from God and His law. When the Word of God tells us in Galatians chapter 5, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage,” He was not talking about God's law. He was talking about the traditions of the Pharisees. God's law is not bondage. God's law is freedom.

God ordained life. God is the author of life. God gave us life. Life is to be lived on His terms, within the boundaries and parameters that He established. When we live presumptuously, we condemn ourselves to death.

Proverbs 8:35–36 says, "For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death." Our Lord said this. True liberty, true freedom is obeying God and His Word. One application is this: God's law is our rule, it is our standard, and it is our measure for conduct. If we want to please God, we obey His law. His law is liberty; His law is freedom. It is the perfect law of liberty.

We are either going to be in subjection to God or man. Man's law is totalitarianism; man's law is tyranny. Man's law equals serfdom and slavery. God's law equals freedom and liberty.

As Joshua said to the people in Joshua 24 and verse 15, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." If you want liberty and freedom, you find it in obedience.

As Joshua said to the people, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your father served, which were on the other side of the floods, or the gods of the Amorites. But as for me

and my house, we will serve the Lord. If you want liberty and freedom, you find it in obedience.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You. We ask You, Heavenly Father, for Your grace and for Your mercy and Your goodness and Your kindness to us. Help us to see, Father, the importance of obedience, and help us to see, Father, in Thy law is life, liberty, freedom. We praise Thee for Your goodness and Your graciousness and Your kindness to us. Help us, Father, to live for Thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Life and Death

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

Well, let's open our Bible today to our text. We're going to look at basically two texts today. We're going to be looking at Deuteronomy chapter 32 and verse 39, and then Jeremiah 48 and verse 10. So let's go to Deuteronomy chapter 32, if you would please. And we'll read verse 39, and then we'll turn to Jeremiah 48 and verse 10. Deuteronomy 32 verse 39, God says, "See now that I, even I am He, and there is no God with Me.

I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. Neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand." And then in the book of Jeremiah chapter 48 and verse 10, and I want you to please hold Jeremiah 48, because that's going to be the main text a little bit later. Jeremiah 48 verse 10, where God says, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood."

Now very quickly for those of you who were not here last week, I would encourage you to please listen in full to the tape or the CD, whatever you have on Life and Death Part 1. Today we're continuing Life and Death Part 2. Now I pointed out last week by way of introduction, to God alone belongs the issues of life and death. It is God who gives life. It is God who takes life. Life and death are on His terms and not on our terms.

You will remember that when Job lost his ten children, he said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." And Job worshipped God. Death certainly is in the hands of God alone. Man cannot take life, including his own, without being guilty of murder. God has commanded, "Thou shalt not kill." So this prohibition then includes taking one's own life. The power to kill and the power to take life is under God and His law. We may not take life unlawfully. You must remember that God has given the civil magistrate the power of the sword according to Romans chapter 13. I told you last week in times past I have dealt with the biblical doctrine of self-defense and there were 19 reasons given why life may be lawfully taken on God's terms, and one of those reasons was defending one's own life or the lives of others, and of course there were just wars mentioned

Let me begin today by reminding you that last week I emphasized that life was in God's hands. Everything I showed you boiled down to this simple truth: Since God is the author and giver of life, life is to be lived according to God, on God's terms, and under His law. I made the statement last week that God's law is life—not that it gives us life, but that our liberty and freedom are found in God.

You can liberate a fish from the water, but taking the fish out of the water is not true liberty or freedom; it is destruction and death, because God created the fish to live in the water. You can take a bird out of the air, out of the environment God created for him to live in, and plunge him under the water. Although you have liberated him from the air, it is not true liberty and freedom; it is only death.

You can pluck a tree up by the roots from the soil. You have liberated that tree, but it is not true liberty or freedom for the tree to be plucked up by its roots. It is death. You can take man out from under God's law, and man today claims it is true liberty and freedom

to be free from God's law, but then he finds it is only destruction and death. True liberty and true freedom, true life, are under God's law. God is the author of life, and God is the author of death.

God's Right to Take Life

Some have said concerning wars that the only just war is a defensive war. But that is not true. There are many just wars in the Bible that were offensive wars, and they were just because God commanded them. We read in Deuteronomy 32:4 concerning God: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all of His ways are judgment: a God of truth, just and right is He.” Whatever God does is absolutely just. God is the author of life, and He has a sovereign right to dispose of life as He pleases. Many individuals and nations have long forfeited their lives by their idolatry and other crimes against a holy, righteous God, and God has justly sentenced them to death.

Each of us can quote the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." But you must remember that this commandment is to mankind. God's law binds us; it does not bind God. God is above His law and is the author of His law. God is not bound by His law because He is God. Has it ever dawned upon you that only God can do as He pleases? I remember when I was a teenager and had to work. I thought to myself, if I ever get grown and get away from this farm, I'll do whatever I please. I found out that I couldn't do what I pleased; I had to do what I had to do. Only God can do as He pleases. That is why the Bible says in Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased."

Those who have trouble with the concept that God takes life in time and history, and does so justly and righteously, must wrestle with this: If God does not have the power, authority, and right to justly and righteously take life now in time and history, how will He be able to do it in eternity when He punishes the wicked?

It is true that God oftentimes takes lives through what we refer to as natural calamities: hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, droughts, famines, diseases, tsunamis, pestilences, and many other so-called natural calamities. In 2 Samuel 24:15, God killed 70,000 men with a pestilence because of David's sin—70,000!

All these natural calamities that the world wickedly calls acts of Mother Nature are, in reality, acts of Father God, because they are acts of God's righteous judgment in time and history. You must remember—and I am going to say this several times in the next month or so—there are no accidents in a world ruled by God, only incidents. The Bible says in Amos 3:6, "Shall a trumpet be blown in a city, and the people not be afraid? Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Now think about that: "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"

There is no act, nor can there be any act, over which God either does not allow or exercise full and total control. I do not care whether it is an evil act or a righteous act. If there is anything over which God does not have control, then that thing is God and not God. God is sovereign; He has control over everything. Therefore, He said, “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” If a hurricane rips up a city, God has done it. If a tornado destroys a city, God has done it. If pestilence and disease stalk a city, God has done it.

Years ago, Rolf Barnard upset many people with a sermon titled “The God of the Bible Kills People.” He upset a lot of people, but it was true, and it is true today. What did we read in Deuteronomy 32:39? “I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal, neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand.”

The Perversion of God's Love

Why would anyone not believe that God has the right, power, and authority to take life? God gave it; it is in His hands, and He has the absolute right to dispose of it as He pleases. If you begin teaching this, as Rolf Barnard taught it, people will get upset. The reason most people do not think that God will take life is a perverted teaching on the doctrine of the love of God.

It is true that God is love. The Bible teaches that God is love. But the Bible also teaches that God is light, that God is spirit, and that God is just. The perverted teaching of the love of God has been spread so widely that most people tend to think of God as some sort of sissy, effeminate, emotionally warped individual who allows

anyone and everyone to resist Him and run over Him, and who would never lift a finger to hurt even His most hateful enemies.

Such is not the God of Scripture, and such is not the truth of Scripture. God is indeed holy, but God is also just and righteous. God is what He is and what He is declared to be in Scripture. He is not the figment of our imaginations; He is not what we wish Him to be.

He is not what we desire Him to be. He is what He is revealed in Scripture. The average sinner misinterprets the doctrine of the love of God as a license to sin. His thinking is this: If God loves me, then He is not going to judge me. If God really loves me, He would never send me to the lake of fire; He would never do anything that would hurt me, so I can sin with impunity against God. Well, that certainly is not the truth, but that is how most people interpret the love of God.

Arthur W. Pink wrote years ago, “There are many today who talk about the love of God, who are total strangers to the God of love.” That first sentence is worth its weight in gold. He continued: “The divine love is commonly regarded as a species of amiable weakness, a sort of good-natured indulgence. It is reduced to a mere sickly sentiment, patterned after human emotion.”

The truth is that, on this, as on everything else, our thoughts need to be formed and regulated by what is revealed in the Holy Scripture. Pink goes on: “God’s love is not regulated by caprice, passion, or sentiment, but by principle. Just as His grace reigns not at the expense of it, but through righteousness, so His love never conflicts with His holiness. God is light” (1 John 1:5) is mentioned before “God is love” (1 John 4:8). God’s love is no mere amiable weakness or effeminate softness. Scripture declares, “Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” God will not wink at sin, even in His own people. His love is pure, unmixed, without maudlin sentimentality. And that is true.

Now, in Nahum chapter 1, look at verses 2 and 3.

God is love. That is true. But look at Nahum 1, verse 2. The Scripture says, "God is jealous and the Lord revengeth. The Lord revengeth and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The Lord is

slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and in the clouds of the dust of His feet." Note again, "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked." So God is love, but God is just.

In Deuteronomy chapter 7, verses 9 and 10, we see the same God who is love. The Scripture says, "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him, and keepeth His commandments to a thousand generations, and repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them."

He will not be slack to him that hateth Him. He will repay him to his face. So the love of God does not destroy the justice and the holiness and the righteousness of God.

Now God does kill. God does take life. In fact, He takes individual lives. He killed Ananias and Sapphira in Acts chapter 5 for lying to Him. He killed proud, arrogant Herod in Acts chapter 12. He took care of Belshazzar in Daniel chapter 5. He killed Hophni and Phinehas on the same day in 1 Samuel chapter 4. So God does take individual lives.

God also takes the lives of soldiers, of armies. You will remember, without turning there, how God slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night with one stroke of the sword in 2 Kings 19. You'll remember how He drowned Pharaoh and his entire host in Exodus chapter 14. And then, of course, He destroyed Sisera and his host in Judges chapter 5. In fact, we're told in Judges chapter 5 that even the stars in heaven fought against Sisera. So God not only takes individual lives, He takes the lives of armies as well.

Biblical Examples of God Killing

The king of Israel understood that God had the power to kill and the power to heal. In 2 Kings chapter 5, Naaman the leper was a Syrian. The king of Syria had heard through the little girl that there was a prophet in the land, and he sent Naaman to the king of Israel to be healed of his leprosy. The king of Israel said, "Am I God to kill and to make alive that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his

leprosy? Wherefore, consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me."

But notice what the king said: "Am I God to kill and to make alive?" What was he confessing? He was acknowledging that it is God who kills. It is God who takes life. It is God who gives life. The Bible says in 1 Samuel 2 and verse 6, "The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up." The Lord killeth and the Lord maketh alive.

God gave the children of Israel a warning and a threat, pointing out the fact that God does indeed kill. I want you to turn in your Bibles to the book of Exodus, chapter 22. Notice, if you would, Exodus chapter 22 and verse 24. Look what God says.

He's talking about messing with the widows and the orphans. He said, "And My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with a sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." In other words, go back up to verse 22. He said, "You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and their cry at all come unto Me, I will surely hear their cry, and My wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with a sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless."

Now what did God say? God said, "I'll kill you. You disobey Me, I'll kill you." You say, "Now wait a minute, Brother Weaver. All these verses, they're all in the Old Testament." Yes, they are. But let me remind you of something. I'm going to show you something in the New Testament. We have one Bible, not two. And we have one God. And the same God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament.

His law does not change. His word does not change. Because He does not change, He is immutable. He is unchangeable. So therefore, if you would like to look in your Bibles, in Matthew chapter 10, I will show you what our Lord said in verse 28. Matthew chapter 10 and verse 28. Then we will go to the book of Revelation. Look at Matthew chapter 10 and verse 28. Notice our Lord said this, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Now let me ask you a question. If God has the ability and the power to destroy both soul and body in hell, does He not have that same ability and that same power and that same right to destroy in time and in history? And the answer, of course, is yes. If you will look in your Bibles to the book of Revelation chapter 2. Revelation chapter 2. And in this instance, our Lord is talking to the church at Thyatira. Revelation chapter 2, and let's look down to verse 23. He's talking about the church there that allows fornication and idolatry to go on. In fact, let's begin reading there with verse 20. He tells the church of Thyatira, verse 18. You can see the church of Thyatira, verse now, verse 20.

He said, “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach, and to seduce My servants, to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except thou repent of their deeds, and I will kill her children with death. And all the churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and the hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works.”

Those are New Testament verses. God does kill. Oftentimes, when God kills, He uses means. God may kill directly or immediately, but usually He kills mediately, through the use of means—and by that I mean through men.

Why should we think that strange? Romans 13:3–4 says concerning the civil magistrate, “For he beareth not the sword in vain: he is the revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” God gave man the power of the sword in the sphere and realm of civil authority. What did He say in Genesis 9:6? “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made He man.”

God can kill directly. He did Herod; He smote him instantly. But many times He uses men. In the Old Testament, every family had an avenger of blood. If a relative was murdered or killed, the avenger of blood had the responsibility to track down and kill the murderer, thus cleansing the land of bloodshed. Numbers 35:19 speaks of a

man who has become a murderer: “The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer.”

Numbers chapter 35, verse 19, says, “The avenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer. When he meeteth him, he shall slay him.” God said, Here is the avenger of blood, the family member who, at that particular time, had authority under God to slay anyone who murdered his family member. Thus God did use the avenger of blood.

In Exodus chapter 32, God used the Levites to cleanse the land of idolatry. Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me.” All the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. Moses said, “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses.”

“And there fell to the people that day about three thousand men.” These were men who were unrepentant in fornication and idolatry, worshipping the golden calf. God said, “Kill them,” and that is exactly what the children of Levi did. They slew every man his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

All of that points out the fact that God does kill. The power of life and the power of death is in His hands. In Jeremiah 48:10, the text says, “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” There are two curses pronounced in this text. The first refers to doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, and the second refers to withholding one’s sword from blood, or from killing.

Notice the word “cursed”: “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.” The word “curse” in the Hebrew literally means to curse, to curse bitterly, to lay under a curse, and to cause to be cursed.

Exposition of Jeremiah 48:10

Therefore God is placing a curse upon anyone who does the work of the Lord deceitfully, slothfully, and with a slack hand. He also places a curse upon anyone who refuses to kill when it is time to kill: "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood." Do you remember Ecclesiastes 3 and verse 3? "There's a time to kill and a time to heal. A time to break down and a time to build up."

William Gurnall, one of the old Puritans, lived in the 1500s and the 1600s. He wrote an amazing paragraph in 1600, and what he wrote then is just as applicable today. Gurnall said, "When I consider how the goodness of God is abused by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of the mind that said, the greatest miracle in the world is God's patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince had an enemy that has gotten into one of his towns, he does not send them in provision, but lays up siege to them, and does what he can to starve them out.

"But the great God, that could wink all His enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them. Well may He command us to bless them that curse us, who Himself does good to the evil and unthankful. But think not sinners, that you shall escape thus. God's mill goes slow, but it grinds small. The more admirable His patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and unsupportable and unstoppable will be that fury that arises out of His abused goodness.

"Nothing is smoother than the sea, yet when stirred into a tempest, nothing rages more. Nothing so sweet as the patience and goodness of God and nothing so terrible as His wrath when it takes fire."

Gurnall was right when he said that the vast majority of people abuse and misuse the goodness, mercy, and kindness of God. Scripture's teaching in Jeremiah 48 and verse 10 is a very difficult concept for us to grasp. There is a time to withhold our hands from shedding blood, when we have no authority or right to do so. But God does say that there comes a time when He gives special authority and special right to shed blood. When He gives that

authority and right, cursed is the man who keeps back his sword from blood.

One of my favorite illustrations is about Stonewall Jackson. Once, when Stonewall Jackson was performing a strategic withdrawal, Yankee cavalry attacked his rear. Turner Ashby and his men dismounted to receive the attack. They poured such a volley of fire into the Yankee cavalry that they killed every cavalryman but one. The Yankee cavalryman did not stop his charge; he continued right through the Confederate line.

He then stopped his horse, turned, and rode back. None of the Confederates would shoot him, because they were so enthralled by his courage and bravery. When Stonewall Jackson was informed of the incident and the bravery of the Yankee cavalryman, he replied, "Kill them all. I don't want any brave Yankees. Kill the brave ones and the cowards will flee." Stonewall Jackson understood Jeremiah 48:10: "Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood."

To understand Jeremiah 48:10, we must understand the context. We cannot cover the entire chapter here, so this is a brief summary. Jeremiah 48 concerns the destruction of Moab. This destruction was foretold to be great, general, and to extend to all parts of the country. Notice verse 1: "Against Moab, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Woe unto Nebo, for it is spoiled."

“Kiriathaim is confounded and taken. Misgab is confounded and dismayed.” In verse 6, we have another declaration: “Flee, save yourselves, be like the heath in the wilderness.” Verse 8 says, “And the spoilers shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape. The valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord had spoken.” Again, in Jeremiah 48, it is foretold that the spoilers will come, that people will be forced to flee, and that many will be carried into captivity. In verse 16, he says, “The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteneth fast.” In other words, God said it was coming upon them. God had ordained it, ordered it, and commanded it. It would come very swiftly and as a surprise to them.

Verse 40 says, “For thus saith the Lord, Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. Kerioth is taken, and the strongholds are surprised. And the mighty men's heart in Moab

at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pains." This destruction would come swiftly, like an eagle, and would surprise them. The country would be laid absolutely waste, forcing the people to quit their idols. Verse 13 says, "And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, their confidence."

The causes of their destruction are plainly evident in this passage. It was not merely sin in general, but also their pride, haughtiness, carnal confidence, and idolatry. In verse 7, he says, "For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken. And Chemosh, their false god, shall go forth into captivity with its priests and its princes together." They had trusted in their works and their money. Chemosh was a false god that could not even protect himself; he would go into captivity with his priests and princes. Verse 11 says, "Moab had been at ease from his youth, and he had settled on his lees, and had not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither had he gone into captivity."

Therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. God says, "Make ye him drunken, for he magnified himself against the Lord." "Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, he shall be held in derision. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? Was he found among thieves? For since thou spakest of him, thou skippest for joy." In other words, Moab marveled and rejoiced in Israel's destruction. So God says, you are going to reap exactly what you are sowing. "I know his wrath, saith the Lord, that is Moab's wrath, but it shall not be so, and his lies shall not so effect it." All of chapter 48 involves the destruction of Moab.

Who is doing the destroying? Ultimately, God is doing the destroying, but God is using the Babylonians, or the Chaldeans. When Jeremiah says, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood," the prophet of God is speaking for God to the Chaldean army, the Babylonian army. He is telling the Babylonians that they are to be God's instruments against the Moabites. Literally, he is saying, spare not, but shed blood; let no humanity move you. This is the work of God, something that God has ordained and commanded. You will be accursed if you do not obey God; you will be cursed if you

withhold your sword from blood. He is telling this army to go courageously, do what they have been commanded to do, and destroy and wipe out the Moabites. God did use the Babylonians to destroy Moab.

God's Use of Wicked Nations

He also used the Babylonians to destroy Judah. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, arrogant, haughty monarch, but Jeremiah 25 shows how God referred to him when He sent him against Judah: “Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all the nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment and

What did God say about Nebuchadnezzar? He was His servant. And what did God do? God sent him to destroy not just Judah and Jerusalem, but the nations round about. Jeremiah 27:6 says, “And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant. And the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.” Note that he refers to him again as “My servant.” Why would God refer to proud, arrogant, haughty, rebellious Nebuchadnezzar as His servant? Because he was doing that which God had sent him to do: to chastise and destroy Judah and Jerusalem, Moab, the Ammonites, and all the people round about.

Do you realize that God also used the Assyrians like that? While God used the Babylonians to chastise and destroy Judah and Jerusalem, the southern kingdom, He used the Assyrians in the northern kingdom. The Assyrians were a wicked, vile people. I could sit here and tell you for an hour how vile they were. It was the Assyrians who came up with crucifixion, skinned people alive, flayed them alive, made pyramids of human skulls, and bragged about their cruelty. Yet Isaiah 10:5-7 says:

“O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. I will send him against the hypocritical nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire

of the streets. Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations, not a few."

Now look back at verse 5. God refers to the Assyrian as the rod of His anger. He says the staff in their hand is His indignation. In verse 6, God says, "I will send him against the hypocritical nation, against the people of My wrath." He gives him a charge to take the spoil, take the prey, and tread them down like the mire of the streets. Although God sent him for this purpose, the Assyrian did not mean so; his heart was set on destroying and cutting off many nations.

"Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so, but it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off nations not a few." Did the Assyrians come to Israel and say, "I'm here because God sent me; I'm doing the will of God"? No, they did not. They did not even know that God was using them. The only thing they wanted to do was kill, murder, rape, pillage, rob, steal, and spoil. That's all! But they would never have been there had God not sent them. They would never have done what they did had God not given them a charge, had God not been in absolute and total control of them.

God is in control of everyone. Whether they like it or not, admit it or not, know it or not, it does not matter. Even the most wicked and vile are under God's absolute control, and all serve Him whether they mean to or not. It is God who sent the wicked to chastise His erring, sinful, and disobedient people. Many times in the Bible, God uses one wicked nation to chastise another wicked nation and destroy them.

In Psalm 17, verse 13, David prays against the wicked and says, "Arise, O Lord, disappoint him, cast him down, deliver my soul from the wicked, which is Thy sword." The wicked are God's sword. God uses them many times to punish and chastise His own sinful people; He uses them to chastise and punish each other.

Life and death are in God's hands. He has appointed the time of our birth and the time of our death. In Jeremiah 48, He gave the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, a charge to destroy the Moabites. They had a commission from God and the authority of God to destroy Moab, Judah, the Ammonites, and all the surrounding nations. They

were to fulfill that charge faithfully and fully. It was not to be done by halves.

Consequences of Withholding the Sword

That is why He said, “Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that withholdeth his sword from blood.” What was God saying? “I have given you the authority and the command to take life, and you are to do it fully, without holding back, without regard; you simply obey.” Have you ever thought about this? Have you ever noticed the kings and civil rulers who were under the curse of God for withholding the sword from blood? Let me show you just a couple.

In 1 Samuel 15, Samuel the prophet came to King Saul: “Samuel also said unto Saul, The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over His people, over Israel. Now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not. But slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox, sheep, camel and ass.”

It is not only defensive wars that are just; there are offensive wars. Who started this war? God did. The Amalekites had done certain things to Israel when they came out of Egypt four hundred years earlier. Now God said, “I remember what they have done,” and the time had come for His vengeance. Saul was given the commission to smite and destroy them all—man, woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

But Saul took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and spared the best of the sheep, oxen, fatlings, lambs, and all that was good, while destroying everything vile and refuse. “But he took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, and utterly destroyed all the people at the edge of the sword. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and of the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them, but everything that was vile and refuse, that they utterly destroyed.”

God had told him to slay it all. Because of this, Saul lost his kingdom and was rejected; God refused to have him anymore as His king. This is where David came in and became anointed and appointed by God. But Saul lost more than his kingdom. Turn to 2 Samuel 1.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Samuel 1:1-8 (KJV)

Let me read something to you here. 2 Samuel chapter 1. Let's begin reading with verse 1.

"Now it came to pass after the death of Saul when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites. And David had abode two days in Ziklag. It came even to pass on the third day that, behold, a man came out of the camp from Saul with his clothes rent and earth upon his head. And so it was when he came to David that he fell to the earth and did obeisance. David said unto him, From whence comest thou? He said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. And David said unto him, How went the matter, I pray thee, tell me?"

"And he answered, That the people are fled from the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead. And Saul and Jonathan his sons are dead also. And David said unto the young man that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? And the young man that told him said, As I happened by chance upon Mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear, and lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me, and I answered, Here am I. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite."

The Amalekite said unto David, “And he said unto me again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me, for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after these fallen. And I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was upon his arm, and brought them hither unto my Lord.” Who art thou? I am an Amalekite. Saul spared the best, and in the end, the best slew him.

What do you get for withholding your sword from blood? Death. In 1 Kings chapter 20, you will read about a war that King Ahab had with King Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria. Ahab was king of Israel. The king of Israel had the opportunity to wipe out the Syrians and Ben-Hadad. Instead of killing King Ben-Hadad when he could have, Ahab not only called him his brother, but made a treaty with him and spared him and the rest of his men. Look at what God says in 1 Kings chapter 20 and verse 42: “Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.”

What? What? That is right. God said, Ahab, you spared someone that I had appointed to death; your life will go for his life. You let those people go, when I had appointed them for death; your people will go for their people.

“Cursed be he that withholdeth his sword from blood.” When there is a command, when there is the authority of God, you cannot do the work of God deceitfully. There was one man who did well: Jehu. John Gill deals with this same principle and the truth of Jeremiah 48 in verse 10, and he says: “This is a general rule. Cursed be he that doeth the work of God deceitfully, and withholdeth his sword from blood. This is a general rule which may be applied to all divine work and service. Every man has work to do for God, some in a more public, others in a more private way.”

All should be done in uprightness and sincerity, with all faithfulness and integrity. It is done deceitfully when men play the hypocrite, and negligently when they are backward to it, lukewarm in it, and infrequent in its performance. This brings upon them the curse of God, which is not a curse causeless, but a legal one, and no other than the wrath of God in strict justice. That is why God told Ahab, “Your life for his, and your people for his people.” That is why Saul lost his kingdom. That is why Saul lost his life.

Jehu's Zeal and the Principle of No Pity

In 2 Kings chapter 10, Jehu was appointed king over Israel, and God appointed him to wipe out the house of Ahab. Jehu killed Jezebel; she was thrown out of a window, and he trod her under his horse’s

feet and his chariot wheels. In 2 Kings chapter 10, beginning with verse 10, Jehu says concerning the death of all Ahab's people: "Know now therefore there shall fall into the earth nothing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spake concerning the house of Ahab. For the Lord hath done that which He spake by His servant Elijah. So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and all his kinfolks, and all his priests, until he left him none remaining." Jehu killed them all. God also gave Jehu another task: to wipe out Baal worship in Israel.

In 2 Kings chapter 10 and verse 16, Jehu met his friend Jonadab, the son of Rechab. He saluted him and said, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?" Jonadab answered, "It is." Jehu said, "If it be, give me thine hand." Jonadab gave him his hand, and Jehu took him up into the chariot. He said, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." So they made him ride in the chariot.

Jehu went to Samaria and said that Ahab served Baal a little, but he would serve him a lot. He proclaimed a great feast for all the followers and priests of Baal and gathered them in the house of Baal. Then he told his men to ensure that no worshipper of Jehovah was there. There was not one. Then he told his men, "Kill every one of them."

He said, "If you let them go, your life for his life." "Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel." How did he do that? As soon as he had made an end of the offering of the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guard, "Do the captains go in and slay them, and let none come forth?" As they smote them with the edge of the sword, the guard and the captains cast them out and went to the house of Baal. They brought forth the images out of the house of Baal and burned them. They break down the image of Baal and break down the house of Baal and made it a draught house unto this day. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

He killed them all. This is a very difficult concept, but I am going to show it to you from another aspect and another angle. Our God is merciful, and we are to be a merciful people. But do you realize there is none as merciful as the Lord? And yet there comes a time when He is unmerciful. We are to be a merciful people, but there comes a time

when we are not to extend mercy, when we are not to extend even pity.

There are many proponents today of letting murderers live. They protest the death penalty, but here is what God says. Deuteronomy chapter 19, verse 13, is talking about the murderer, the man who deserves death. In fact, let us read verse 12: “Then the elders of his city shall sit and fetch him thence, and deliver him in the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.” Look what God says: “Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee.” God says you are to have no pity and no mercy upon a man who is a murderer; he is to be put to death.

Again, speaking to the judges, God says: “And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. Thine eye shall not pity.”

If I were to ask you, would it be right to always emulate our Heavenly Father? What would you say? Yes. Let us look in Jeremiah chapter 13, beginning with verse 13: “Thus shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of the land, even the kings that sit upon David’s throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness, and I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord. I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them.”

The most merciful being there is, the sovereign God of heaven and earth, says there comes a time when He will show no mercy. Scripture teaches that there is a time for mercy and a time to show no mercy, a time to spare and a time not to spare.

Killing Women and Children

In one sense, it is easy to understand the killing of the wicked, especially as it relates to justice. We understand killing in a time of war. God is absolutely holy and absolutely just. But have you stopped to think about those verses where God says to kill the women and the children?

Look in Numbers chapter 31, beginning with verse 15. Some of the warriors Moses sent to destroy the Midianites spared the women: "And Moses said unto them, Have you saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor. And there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." Twenty-three thousand, I think, were killed.

"Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known men by lying with them. But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves." What did he just say? Kill every mother or married woman and every male child. Why? We tend to forget that women and children are sinners, just like soldiers and men. We also forget that whatever God commands is right and holy, and that it is our duty to obey when God directs.

I have a friend who was a soldier for many years, stationed where there were many suicide bombers. One day he saw a very petite woman walking toward him with a bomb strapped on her. He ordered her to stop, but she kept coming. He warned her, "If you cross this line, I will shoot you." She kept coming, and when she stepped over the line, it took twenty-seven rounds to stop her.

Whether she was on drugs, I do not know, but she was intent on killing him and others as well. We are trained always to respect womanhood and tend to think that little children are innocent. Excuse me, they are not. Some men from Vietnam can tell you that children would oftentimes come up with hand grenades, poison cokes, and other things as well. We tend to forget that women and children are sinners and, excuse me for saying this, deserve death just like everyone else. That is why we die.

Keil and Delitzsch, in their Old Testament commentary, said this on Jeremiah 48:10: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully and cursed be he that withholdeth his sword from blood." They state: "The devastation is a work of the Lord and those who execute it must carry out the divine decree so that they may not bring the curse upon themselves."

"The first clause is taken quite generally. The more exact specification of the work of the Lord follows. In the second clause, it is the employment of the sword against Moab. The work of destroying Moab is here mainly meant, but the text taketh in all lawful employments. These are God's works and must be done vigorously with all our might in obedience to God and for His greatest glory.

"Not soldiers only that have a good cause and in a good calling must likewise take a good courage and do execution lustily, but magistrates as well, who are keepers of both tables of the law, must do right without partiality, accounting it better to be counted a busy justice than an honest gentleman. Ministers must look to the ministry which they receive of the Lord, to fulfill the same. Every man in his particular place and station must not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit and serving the Lord." Thus Jeremiah 48:10 says that those Chaldeans had to be fervent in spirit and zealous in serving the Lord.

Applications: Fear God, Avoid Lukewarmness, Find Life in Christ

We must learn to biblically fear God: to fear Him biblically is to understand that He is the God of life and death; life and death are in His hands.

The first time I took Tripp and Daniel out to Front Sight, we were in Bass Pro when Alice called. "Where are you spending the night?" she asked. I said, "We're staying at the Hooters Hotel." Of course, she knew better. After I hung up, I looked at Tripp and Daniel and said, "Now, boys, you know I was teasing Granny. I would never, ever stay at a Hooters hotel, because, first of all, I fear the Lord, and I know I do not want His anger and wrath against me."

Tripp said, "Papa, if you stayed at Hooters, I don't think you'd have to look out for the Lord. I think you'd have to watch out for Granny Alice."

That was the means He used. Why would I not do something like that? Because I fear God. I know God holds life and death in His hands. If God has the power to take life—and He does in time and

history—how much more will He execute that in eternity as well? Our Lord said, “And fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul, but fear Him who are able to kill both soul and body in hell.” In Revelation 15 and verse 4, the question is asked, “Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?” God is the author of life and death. We should fear Him and recognize at all times that we are accountable to obey Him.

The second application is this: God despises half-hearted and lukewarm work. That is why there is a curse attached to it. Do you remember what He said to the church in Revelation 3 and verse 16, the church of Laodicea? “So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of My mouth.” Our Lord is saying, in essence, that He would rather we be out and out for Him or out and out against Him than merely lukewarm.

Whatever we do, we must learn to do heartily as unto the Lord. It does not matter if we are fighting, serving as soldiers, digging ditches, waiting tables, or washing dishes. Whatever we do, we are to do it heartily as unto the Lord. It does not matter if it is menial or important; we are to do it as unto Him, worshiping Him and giving Him the praise and honor acceptable unto Him. God tells us He hates and despises lukewarm worship and lukewarm service.

The third application is this: If we desire life in its fullness, abundance, and joy now, we must seek it in Christ. There is a big difference between living and merely being alive. Real life is found in Jesus Christ. Our Lord said in John 10 and verse 10, “The thief cometh not but to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.” True life and quality of life are found only in Christ. We who serve Him, live for Him, and obey Him have the most joy and happiness out of life.

"See now," said God, "that I am He. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. And there is none that can deliver out of My hand."

Whatever we do, we are to do it as honoring the one true and the living God. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee, thank You, and praise You. We know that Thou art the God of life

and Thou art the God of death. No one can live apart from Thee, and no one can die apart from Thee. Thou, Heavenly Father, hast protected and preserved us, and we acknowledge that. Thank You for allowing us to live, to trust in Thee, and to enjoy Thy blessings. We give Thee praise, honor, and worship in and through our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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