

## GENESIS 9:5-7 IN HIS OWN IMAGE

“For your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.

“Whoever sheds the blood of man,  
by man shall his blood be shed,  
for God made man in his own image.

“And you, be fruitful and multiply, teem on the earth and multiply in it.”<sup>1</sup>

A world that has forgotten God is a brutal place in which to live. In a world without God, respect for human life is not only diminished, it is finally jettisoned and self-preservation presses people to view compassion as weakness and to ignore the will of God. In a world that has forgotten God, a man or a woman is just another creature to be used for one's own advancement and pleasure. Since people no longer bear the image of God, why should the individual be accorded respect?

The Word of God describes society that has forgotten God in various places. Two such instances are found in Paul's letters to the Christians in Rome and in his first letter to Timothy. To the pastor of the church in Ephesus, Paul wrote of the last days. “Understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” [2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5].

In the dark words that open the Letter to Roman Christians, Paul sums up society without God through providing an overview of humanity. “Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's decree that those who practise such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practise them” [ROMANS 1:28-32].

Contemporary Canada displays startling, even distressing evidence, that the conditions of which the Apostle warned are openly embraced throughout society. The message turns our attention back to a time immediately following worldwide judgement, when God made a covenant with those who had survived that judgement. Whether the world hears the words of the Lord or not, we who are Christians are responsible to hear Him and to act on what He has said.

In that spirit, I invite your attention to the words of God which were spoken to Noah and his family. In particular, I ask you to focus on God's estimate of human life as revealed in the covenant He made with all mankind through Noah. The text for the message this day is found in **GENESIS 9:5-7**, and these words of the Lord will occupy our attention for the next short while.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version** © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE PASSAGE** — God created the world and declared it to be very good; in that world, a man and a woman were placed in a perfect environment—the Garden of Eden. There, our first parents lived until sin entered into the world and they rebelled against the Creator. Through their rebellion, they plunged the creation into sin and ruin.

They were driven from the Garden and into a world that looked the same as before their sin; but it was forever changed. Death now reigned in the world; and whereas life had previously reigned, now all life was subject to death. Foodstuffs rotted, clothing wore out, and tooth and claw was the rule of the jungle. Finally, the actions of one of their own children shattered any hope that nothing had really changed.

Cain murdered his brother Abel, and was subsequently driven from family by the LORD God Himself [GENESIS 4:1-16]. Enoch, Methusael, Methusael and Lamech followed in the lineage of Cain [GENESIS 4:17-24]. Before long, the population of the earth was divided into two groups—the majority of mankind following their own self-interests, and a decreasing number of individuals who called upon the Name of the LORD [GENESIS 4:26]. Those who followed their own desires, undoubtedly religious but unwilling to subjugate their desires to the will of God, grew increasingly numerous, while those who sought the will of God first became a minority, then were marginalised, and at last almost disappeared.

The Bible describes the conditions that prevailed immediately before the Flood with this grim assessment. “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to his Heart...

“Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth” [GENESIS 6:5, 6, 11, 12].

The antediluvian world is described as utterly wicked, and all mankind, with the exception of Noah and his family, was said to be corrupt. Noah is described as a righteous man, though I find nothing describing his wife, his sons or their wives as righteous. In fact, after he built the ark, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation” [GENESIS 7:1]. The pronoun used throughout is singular. In other words, God makes no assessment of Noah’s family, reserving His commendation for Noah alone. It would appear from the Bible that Noah’s family was saved because of his righteousness.

I do not want you to assume that anyone is saved because of the faith of a parent, a grandparent or even the faith of a child or a sibling—we are saved as individuals. However, I do believe that even unbelieving family members are blessed because of the righteousness of those who believe. This is the implication of Paul’s words to the Corinthian Christians when he writes, “the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband” [1 CORINTHIANS 7:14]. One cannot be saved because of the faith of another, but one can be blessed because of the faith of another.

I encourage you to be godly—for Christ’s sake, indeed, but also because your loved ones benefit from your righteousness. Certainly, if you choose to live a godly life before your loved ones, they are consistently exposed to the Faith of Christ the Lord and are provided ample opportunity to see the Good News of Christ in action through your life. Applying the words of the Apostle to every member of your family, I ask, “How do you know ... whether you will save” your loved ones through righteousness displayed in daily life [1 CORINTHIANS 7:16].

The great flood God sent covered the earth, and all flesh died except for those creatures that were in the ark with Noah and his family. God says that “every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and the birds of the heavens” were “blotted out from the earth.” Then, the Word of God simply states, “Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark” [GENESIS 7:23].

When the flood had subsided and the ark had come to rest, Noah and his family exited the ark. His first act was to build an altar to the LORD; and taking some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird (the Bible does not specify how many of each clean animal or bird), he offered burnt offerings on the altar [GENESIS 8:20]. The term “clean” refers to ceremonial cleanness as clarified later under the Law. The animals which were offered were especially precious since only the animals that had been on the ark survived the catastrophic flood. All life hinged on a successful reintroduction of the animals to the earth from those that had been saved in the ark.

As an aside, because the issue is frequently raised by those who are unfamiliar with the details of the account of the flood, God instructed Noah to take “*seven pairs* of all clean animals” into the safety of the ark, but only a single pair of each unclean animal [GENESIS 7:2]. Though children’s songs say that the animals went into the ark two-by-two, in fact there were many more animals than two of each kind.

God blessed the sea creatures and birds He created on the fifth day, and His blessing was to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth” [GENESIS 1:22]. He blessed the man and the woman when He had created them, and His blessing was to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion” over creation [GENESIS 1:28]. Now, Noah and his family are blessed, and the divine blessing is to “be fruitful and multiply.” In fact, God strengthens the blessing when He says, “Teem on the earth and multiply in it” [GENESIS 9:7]. It is significant to note that life is the result when God blesses; when God’s blessing is withdrawn, there is reduced reproduction. Divine blessing, as outlined in Scripture, almost always entails procreation. Man has the power to create life through reproduction; God’s blessing reveals God’s favour as man obeys God by producing offspring.

All things being equal, a nation with a declining birthrate is a nation which God has ceased to bless; a nation with an increasing birthrate is a nation enjoying the blessing of God. A culture that has enthroned the individual’s will as the highest good is a culture that is dying, and it is a culture that no longer witnesses God consistently blessing.

When I was engaged in doctoral studies, the “experts” sought to frighten the populace through august scientific journals, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post; the world would shortly run out of food, sparking massive famines and food riots, they confidently asserted. Paul Ehrlich published “The Population Bomb” in 1968, predicting a worldwide population die-off through starvation in the 70s and 80s. Of course, the predicted catastrophes never happened. Were you to take all the people of the earth, giving each a square metre, you would not fill the Island of Oahu. The world does not have a population problem; it has a distribution problem—a problem of caring for the earth God entrusted to mankind.

Modern societies are not obeying God. Rather, modern societies have become focused on what they imagine will give them greatest joy, and they have denied God’s blessing. The basis for the abortion movement is a desire for self-fulfillment rather than a willingness to trust that God is able to provide for those whom He blesses with children. Consequently, contemporary society has more neurotic people than ever before in the history of the world as modern men and women desperately try to “find themselves.”

**THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS EVIDENT FROM THE TEXT** — With this background to the passage before us, it is now time for us to consider the words that God spoke to Noah. The passage does speak of governmental responsibility to administer capital punishment, but it is the reason for imposing this responsibility that is perhaps most important for a balanced understanding of all interrelationship between mankind. When we understand God's reason for imposing responsibilities on us, we are able to apply that truth in a variety of areas of life.

The first truth to be considered is that **MAN IS MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD**. Most Christians will readily agree that believers are born from above and into the Family of God. I suppose that superficially, we tend to imagine that being in the image of God awaits our transformation at the return of the Saviour. Indeed, Paul informs us that the new self has been “created after the likeness of God” [EPHESIANS 4:24], referring to the righteousness and holiness that should mark the way of believers. However, according to our text, all people were made in God's own image; even sinners bear the image of God, though that image is obviously marred and occasionally even a caricature. James writes, “With [our tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God” [JAMES 3:9].

Because we are created in the image of God, there are other truths that are vital to understanding the responsibilities before the Lord that flow from this first significant truth. In GENESIS 1:28, after we are informed that our first parents were created in the image of God, we read, “God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

Thus, those created in the image of God are *able to hear the Lord*. Immediately after they were created, God spoke to our first parents. We who bear the image of God are able to hear and to receive the Word of the Lord. No other creature in God's creation is capable of hearing Him. Simply stated, this means that we are moral beings and spiritual beings, and thus we are responsible for our choices. We cannot excuse unbelief, because we have the ability to know there is a God and to know His will.

From Scripture, we know that “What can be known about God is plain to [mankind], because God has shown it to [all]” [ROMANS 1:19]. All people are aware of God's “invisible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature,” because they are clearly perceived from His creation [see ROMANS 1:20]. Therefore, failure to hear God's Word is not because God has not revealed His power and nature to mankind; it is because man chooses not to heed what is known.

The Psalmist writes: “Fools say to themselves, ‘There is no God’”<sup>2</sup> [PSALM 14:1]. It is not that atheists have become convinced through extensive study that God does not exist; they decided that they did not want to know of God and so they concluded that He would not play a part in their lives. They are fools because without the knowledge of God there is no moral foundation for decision-making and because life without God degenerates into chaos. Underscore in your mind that as those who bear the image of God, each of us can hear God. Whether we hear the voice of God or not is our responsibility. We have His Word and He has given His preachers to declare His Word throughout the entire world.

Another truth that devolves from being in the image of God is that *we are rulers*. God commanded our first parents to have dominion over all life in the world. In fact, before He created man, God decided that their purpose would be to “have dominion” over all other life. This knowledge astounded the Psalmist as revealed in the 8<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

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<sup>2</sup> The NET Bible

“O LORD, our Lord,  
    how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.  
    Out of the mouth of babies and infants,  
you have established strength because of your foes,  
    to still the enemy and the avenger.

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
    the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him,  
    and the son of man that you care for him?

“Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
    and crowned him with glory and honour.  
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
    you have put all things under his feet,  
all sheep and oxen,  
    and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,  
    whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”

[PSALM 8:1-8]

This does not mean that man is free to exploit the creation. Rather, this knowledge should lead man to treasure the creation and determine that he will guard it, watching over it. Man was placed in the Garden of Eden to care for it and maintain it [see GENESIS 2:15], just as to this day we are responsible to care for and maintain the earth. There are two great excesses evident in mankind's relationship to the earth: either he exploits it, thus destroying it, or he worships it, exalting it to a place of greater value than man himself. Either extreme denies man's divine relationship to the creation and denies man's intrinsic worth before the Lord.

A second truth that naturally flows from the former is that **GOD VALUES HUMAN LIFE**. The preliminary evidence for this truth is the prohibition against murder as stated in today's text. Murder is such a serious issue in God's estimate that He says that whoever murders must forfeit his own life. Notice that capital punishment is not suggested by God; it is **required** by God. Listen again to the fifth verse, noting that three times God says that capital punishment is required. “For your lifeblood I will **require** a reckoning: from every beast I will **require** it and from man. For his fellow man I will **require** a reckoning for the life of man.” Opposition to capital punishment is opposition to what God requires. Animals, as well as people, are to be held accountable. Dog lovers notwithstanding, dogs that kill are to be killed, and if the owner of an animal previously knew of the danger from the animal in his or her care and failed to protect others, the owner is to be held accountable [see EXODUS 21:28, 29].

On this point, notice that God does not Himself take immediate responsibility for retribution, but rather He places responsibility upon mankind. God did not say that He will strike the murderer dead, but from His Word we learn that this responsibility is to be assumed by government who is held responsible for protection of its citizenry [ROMANS 13:3, 4]. Lynch mobs are not sanctioned by this passage, neither is vengeance justified by what God has said.

Nevertheless, government is responsible before God to hold murderers accountable for the life they have taken. It is fair to say that capital punishment administered by government is sanctioned by this verse; the requirement to hold murderers accountable ensures order in society.

Even greater evidence of the value God places on human life is seen in the fact that He gave His only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for sinful man. God not only values human life and requires mankind to also value life, but God has demonstrated the value of life through giving His Son as a sacrifice in the place of sinful man. Throughout the Word of God is abundant evidence of God's desire for all people to experience real life. Through Ezekiel, God pleads, "As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" [EZEKIEL 33:11]. Earlier, He had expressed His desire for mankind, "I have no pleasure in the death of anyone..., so turn and live" [EZEKIEL 18:31].

A third truth is that **MAN IS RESPONSIBLE TO HONOUR GOD THROUGH RESPECTING LIFE**. In the immediate context of the Scripture before us, we fail to show respect for the life of an individual that has been murdered if we fail to hold the murderer accountable. However, the supposed high esteem within society for the life of a murderer reflects a general disdain for life. We imagine that we show compassion by allowing the murderer to live. Euthanasia and abortion are deemed rights by an increasing majority within society, and the dwindling minority is apathetic about the evil among us. Modern society assumes that individual women have the "right" to dispose of the child growing in their womb and that individuals have a "right" to end their life whenever they decide it is no longer convenient. Increasingly evident is the trend to dispose of the elderly because their continued existence is inconvenient to their families or to those responsible to provide care for them. Thus, we promote a culture of death.

Chuck Colson has recently commented that those who have embraced the culture of death have a great deal to celebrate in the year that is just past.<sup>3</sup> As examples, Colson notes that voters in Washington State approved the "Death with Dignity Act," which will allow physicians to prescribe lethal doses of drugs to terminally ill patients. Thus, Washington joins Oregon as states that have legalised assisted suicide, transforming physicians into those who end life rather than those who extend and preserve life. Of course, there is no dignity in death.

This coming week the world will witness a new President assuming the reins of power in Washington. Barack Hussein Obama, the President-elect, throughout his campaign promised to enact the "Freedom of Choice Act." Moreover, he has a congress to work with him that is evidently inclined to ensure that this act will become law in the United States. This deceptively named act will eliminate most restrictions on abortion. United States law is tending toward making parental notification, informed consent, conscientious objection by healthcare providers and restrictions on late-term abortions a distant memory.

The new administration in Washington has also pledged to do all that it can to promote the use of human embryos for stem cell research, thus further devaluing human life when it is most vulnerable. Killing an infant *in utero* in order to permit anyone who is already born to have a better quality of life can no more be justified than can the sale to wealthy westerners of organs harvested from criminals executed in China. It is bad enough that such things are done, but to imagine that government sponsors such actions can only be said to be reprehensible.

Also, in 2008, legislators in Luxembourg concluded that the "right to die" was so important that they stripped Grand Duke Henri of his constitutional right to veto legislation because he dared to oppose a new euthanasia law.

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<sup>3</sup> See Chuck Colson, "A Culture Commits Suicide," (<http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=10888>) accessed 13 January 2008

It was not enough that individuals are now able to invent ways of killing themselves. Now people can share their final moments with onlookers. Britain's Sky Network broadcast the final minutes of the life of Craig Ewert, an American citizen suffering from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease. Ewert paid the Swiss assisted suicide group Dignitas 3,000 pounds to help him die. He travelled to Switzerland, at the moment the sole nation that accepts foreigners who want to kill themselves.

Then, there is the horrific case of a 19-year-old Florida man who committed suicide while some 1,500 viewers watched online. The video has spread across the world via the Web.

Is death really our reason for living? Scripture tells us that God has set before us life and death [see **DEUTERONOMY 30:19**]; and though God urged His people to choose life, it is evident that our culture is choosing death.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT** — The text demonstrates an intersection between theology and politics. By His command, God places the responsibility for protecting all life upon government. In modern democracies, the people are supposed to be the ultimate voice. Therefore, as members of society, we Christians are responsible to be good citizens. Under Canadian parliamentary democracy, good citizenship means holding government accountable through electing godly parliamentarians and through making ourselves aware of legislation even while holding legislators responsible for their votes. Therefore, I wish to present several propositions that will prove beneficial in equipping ourselves with a sound view of government.<sup>4</sup>

**THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF GOVERNMENT IS FORCE.** This is not something that we like to think about; "force" is not supposed to be good in the estimate of contemporary culture. For instance, we are taught that it is bad to force children to do something, for instance. We prefer to give them "options," we try to reason with them, presenting the good as being "in their best interests," or we offer "rewards" rather than punishments to induce obedience and compliance with our expectations. Individually, we react negatively to every form of coercion; we resist being forced to do anything.

When we think about government, particularly our own familiar form of government, we do not like to think of it as existing by force and operating through force. We like to think of it as giving moral guidance, appealing to the best in its people, and providing an environment for growth and self-fulfillment. It is true that government does do some of these things. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that the essential operating element of any government is force.

Perhaps a familiar example will make the point. The Canadian Revenue Agency says that we have a unique system of voluntary self-assessment for paying income tax in this country. We are told that Canadians voluntarily pay billions of dollars into government coffers each year. But income tax is not really voluntary. If you doubt that, try refusing to pay your income tax; or refuse to pay even part of you taxes. Say you object to the portion of your taxes that are used for the Afghanistan mission, or foreign aid to Palestinians or the Canadian Firearms programme.

What will happen if you withhold a portion? Will the government say, "Well, our tax system is voluntary; if this person doesn't want to pay, there's just nothing we can do about it." Of course, that is not what will happen. You will be billed and fined; and if you still refuse to pay, you will be arrested and your assets will be seized to pay the delinquent taxes. The payment of taxes is not at all voluntary; it is mandatory, and the proof of the mandatory requirement to pay taxes is the government's willingness to use of force to accomplish its objectives.

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<sup>4</sup> The following points are taken from James Montgomery Boice, **Genesis: An Expositional Commentary** (Baker, Grand Rapids, MI 1998) 382-5

Consider another example. Suppose you are a businessman who is becoming bogged down under the increasing mounds of government red tape. You have so many forms to fill out that you decide you just will not fill them out this year. What will happen? You know what will happen. The government will close down your business and arrest you for violating its laws.

A second proposition is that **GOVERNMENT CANNOT DEVELOP MORALITY**. The key word in this assertion is “develop.” Government is not unconcerned with morality; in fact, morality is the only valid basis for law. If the government passes a law against stealing and enforces it with the sword, the only valid basis for that law is that stealing is wrong. If stealing is not wrong, then the act of government is tyranny—an unjust and intolerable restriction of freedom. If stealing is wrong, then the government is acting properly. The same principle holds true with all laws. *The only valid basis for any law is a previously existing morality.* We see this in the institution of capital punishment in **GENESIS 9:6**. Here government has been given the right—no, the responsibility—to take the murderer’s life on the basis that the one killed was “in the image of God” and that murder is therefore an offence to God.

To recognize the connection between law and morality is not to say that the government can develop morality in its citizens—it cannot. Government can prescribe penalties; and it can enforce them. But it cannot develop the morality those penalties and their enforcement express. If you doubt this, consider that both federal and provincial governments have outlawed the sale and use of non-prescribed drugs, but the traffic in illegal narcotics flourishes. Similarly, prior to the Supreme Court of Canada ruling of January 28, 1988, removing all restrictions on abortion, abortions in Canada faced a variety of restrictions. Nevertheless, abortions were still performed! The restrictions did not ensure the regard for human life we desire.

Undoubtedly, some will argue that when the judiciary struck down every restriction on abortion, it opened a floodgate for abuse, and that is true. Far more infants are murdered in the womb today than previously—nearly one hundred thousand per year in this country for the past twenty-one years. But that is only to say that the law was a restraint on desires that were already present, not that it created contrary desires, which it did not do.

At best, government will express in laws and enforce by its inherent power the sense of morality already present (or absent) in its citizenry. But the morality itself must come from another source. What can that be? If it is not the morality of mere pragmatism (what works), or the morality of consensus (what most of us want, and the others do not count), it must be the morality of revealed religion working its way into national life through those citizens who know and sincerely desire to please God.

In other words, to go back to my previous examples, the only thing that will restrict the use and abuse of drugs in a society is the conviction of a majority of its citizens that this is wrong. Or again, the only thing that will reduce or eliminate abortion is the deep conviction on the part of many that abortion of babies is murder and that murder, even murder of the unborn, is intolerable. This means that your convictions and your forthright expression of those convictions are more important in the ultimate analysis than the laws that may be forthcoming. If the morality is not there to support the laws, then even the laws themselves may be used immorally. The law can be used to get out of paying one’s debts, to escape a just prison sentence, to cheat the innocent, to oppress the poor, and to commit similar atrocities.

This leads to a second proposition: **A HEALTHY GOVERNMENT NEEDS A HEALTHY CITIZENRY**. If government cannot produce morality; morality must be provided from a religious source. If this element is missing from among the people of a nation, then government itself becomes corrupt and tyrannous. Essentially, the people get the government they deserve.



This, too, has a conclusion in regard to Christian people. In a declining cultural and moral environment, such as our own, the greatest need is not for more laws or even for a greater spiritual sensitivity on the part of unbelievers, but rather for confession of sin and a deep moving of the Spirit of God among God's people.

This is a burden of one of the most important texts of the Bible relating to national renewal. On the night following the dedication of the Temple Solomon built, the LORD appeared to the king and gave him these words: "If My people who are called by My name, humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" [2 CHRONICLES 7:14]. The cure for national healing is not the election of a better ruler (even a "born-again" one); it is the repentance and renewal of God's people. This is the only way renewal can come; government cannot provide it. Even a "born-again" prime minister cannot provide it. Government can only deal in force, and what is needed is a forceful new understanding of what is right and wrong.

Contemporary faith in government to solve our most basic problems is the height of folly. In times of moral decline the state will inevitably expand or else be overthrown, because the need for order demands it. But in times of high morality, which is synonymous with times of great faith and spiritual awakening, the government need function only in a minimal way. That situation is obviously better! The best situation is to have as few laws as possible.

Christians must remind the state of this ultimate responsibility. Americans speak of government deriving its powers from the consent of the governed, and Canadians agree with that contention tacitly, if not expressly; but there is more to it than that. Government derives its authority from God and is responsible to God. Our role as Christians is to remind the state of that fact and challenge it to operate accordingly.

Can we? Will we? Not as we are presently living—for self and for substance! We can do this only as we are first possessed by Christ the Lord and determine to follow Him at whatever cost. ***We must determine in our minds that God is truly sovereign in human affairs***, including affairs of state. Again, ***we must know the Bible and its teachings***. The reason for this is that while one may be willing to do the right thing, she or he may not know what the right thing is, since the issues are not always black and white but grey. We can respond to such challenging situations properly only when we know the doctrines presented by the Word of God. Finally, ***we must be willing to surrender everything***, even life itself, if that is necessary. Nothing of lasting significance is achieved by those who refuse to sacrifice; our self-indulgent age desperately needs to learn that. But it will not learn it from the state, which sacrifices nothing. As a moral force the state is bankrupt. The world can learn sacrifice only from Christians, who have learned it from their Lord.

Though I have addressed Christians, I now say to those who listen and who are yet outside the Faith, you cannot influence government for righteousness because you are still in your sins. Your first need is to receive the life that is offered in Christ the Lord. He died because of your sin and was raised from the dead to declare you right before God. Your first great need is to receive Him as Saviour and Lord over your life.

The Word of God emphatically declares, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, believing in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right with God and with the mouth that one confesses and is saved." That portion of Scripture concludes with the wonderful promise of life to all who believe when it states, "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" [Author's translation of ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13]. Our prayer is for your salvation. Amen.