



February 26, 2023

Abounding Grace: The Grace of the Law

Pro-life

Exodus 20:12

For Discussion and Reflection

1. The commandment uses the word “murder.” A few bible versions use the word “kill.” In many readers’ minds, the word kill implies “any taking of life,” which they apply to war, capital punishment, and even taking animal life. Some pacifists use this to argue against participation in any war or against self-defense against criminals. The original word is more specific than “kill”, and that is why our translation says “murder,” referring to the premediated taking of a human life. In addition, God prescribes the death penalty for capital offenses, as well as engagement in war, and granting in moments of self-defense. In addition, not all life is considered sacred. Animal life is not equal to the life God breathed into his image-bearers. Consider some of these texts: Deut. 19:1-13, Joshua 20:1-6, Numbers 25:1-18, Ex. 21:12, Gen. 9:6, Leviticus 24:17. How does this guide your thinking about murder?
2. Sometimes this verse is used to challenge military service. Think of the recent movie Hacksaw Ridge where Desmond Doss refuses to engage in fighting. One common argument amongst Christian authors is a little interaction between Peter and Cornelius, Acts 10. God answers the prayer of Cornelius by connecting him to Peter. There is no urging of this soldier to resign or cease his military service. Similarly, when John, the one baptizing, interacts with his audience, he doesn’t call for resignation but for ethical service, Luke 3:1-14 (see also Luke 7:1-10). How does this reveal a biblical perspective on biblical support of military service?
3. “Lex Talionis” or “eye for an eye” is a biblical teaching (see DQ #1). This means more than matching the punishment to the crime. It also means that the punishment can’t exceed the crime. How would this affect our criminal justice system today?
4. When Jesus confronts his people in the Sermon on the Mount, he challenges their minimalistic approach to the commandments, specifically the Sixth Commandment. Read Matthew 5:21-26. Notice that Jesus is challenging the teaching that his audience heard from their leaders, saying, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’” The teacher’s interpretation is a legalistic minimalism that says, “we fulfill the commandment by not taking the life of another.” But Jesus takes them into the heart issues related to murder. What does Jesus teach? How does this apply to us? Consider what was fueling Cain’s murder of his brother, Genesis 4:1-16.
5. The Scripture looks past intent and recognizes negligent homicide. Read Deuteronomy 19:1-13, 22:8; Ex. 21:28,29. Think of applications of protecting the life of others around you today (Ex. Safe driving, fence around a pool, safe work conditions, etc.).
6. When God commands us not to murder, giving specific guidelines for capital offenses, he maintains his authority over life and death. He’s saying to us, “Only I have the right to determine when my image in

man can be destroyed.” This challenges the modern concepts of abortion and euthanasia. Behind arguments for these practices is a person’s right to end a life. This commandment challenges mankind’s authority to make these decisions. (Ex. 21:22-25) Beyond God’s authority, what is the other main issue behind this commandment? Genesis 1:26.

7. The Westminster Larger Catechism applies this commandment to the “sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor, and recreations.” The word “physic” is their word for medicine. Discuss why the authors included these items? How do they threaten life?
8. The Catechism (Q/A 135) says of the duties required, “all careful studies, and lawful endeavors, to preserve the life of ourselves and others...” It’s not enough to resist murdering someone, or to avoid negligence, we are to be “pro-life.” How can we labor to preserve the life of those around us? What about the homeless, the sick, the addict?
9. What has the Spirit spoken to you today? What steps do you need to take to grow in grace?