

“How to Make Godly Decisions, Part 7”
(Lord’s Day School, 7-15-01)

Last week we were looking at the sixth commandment and how it should affect the decisions we make. What were some of the things we saw? It forbids murder at all times, but not necessarily killing at all times. What is murder? The unjust taking away of life, or the taking away of life without God’s permission. What are some of the ways this commandment is broken in our society today? Abortion, some contraception, some fertilization procedures, euthanasia.

VI.B.2. Now does the sixth commandment teach us that we should never kill? No. There are certain situations in which it is the right thing to do.

- a. What are some of those situations?
 - (i) The civil magistrate has the power to execute someone for certain crimes.
 - (a) Numbers 35:31-33, “Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death. And you shall not take ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest. So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.”
 - (b) Romans 13:3-4, “For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.”
 - (c) Every crime doesn’t deserve the death penalty, but there are many that do.
 - (ii) Lawful war is another situation in which we may righteously kill another.
 - (a) In Jeremiah 48:10, the Lord pronounces a curse upon the one who will not go out to fight the Lord’s battle. “Cursed be the one who does the Lord’s work negligently, and cursed be the one who restrains his sword from blood.”
 - (b) See also Deuteronomy 20.
 - (c) Is every war a lawful war? No.
 - (d) What is an unlawful war? A war that is being fought for evil reasons. Can you think of any examples? Many of Russia’s wars: they swallowed up other countries as they tried to take over Asia. Hitler’s war on the European nations. Saddam Hussein’s war on Kuwait.
 - (e) What is a lawful war? A war that is being fought for righteous reasons, such as defending our own nation’s freedom against an evil aggressor, or against tyranny, or defending another nation against a foreign invader.

- (f) Should you fight on the side of the evil aggressor? If you were in Russia in the days when communism was stronger, could you as a Christian fight in their army? No.
- (g) What are the criteria for a lawful war (Samuel Rutherford):
- (I) **Arg. 1:** “That power which is obliged to command and rule justly and religiously for the good of the subjects, and is only set over the people on these conditions, and not absolutely, cannot tie the people to subjection without resistance, when the power is abused to the destruction of laws, religion, and the subjects. But all power of the law is thus obliged, (Rom. xiii. 4 ; Deut. xvii. 18-20 ; 2 Chron. xix. 6 ; Ps. cxxxii. 11, 12 ; lxxxix. 30, 31 ; 2 Sam. vii. 12 ; Jer. xvii. 24, 25,) and hath, and may be, abused by kings, to the destruction of laws, religion, and subjects. The proposition is clear. 1. For the powers that tie us to subjection only are of God. 2. Because to resist them, is to resist the ordinance of God. 3. Because they are not a terror to good works, but to evil. 4. Because they are God's ministers for our good, but abused powers are not of God, but of men, or not ordinances of God; they are a terror to good works, not to evil ; they are not God's ministers for our good.”

Summary: God does not give the government absolute power, but tells them that they are to rule justly. When they abuse that power, so that they destroy the law, religion, and their subjects, they may be resisted, because they are no longer God's ministers for our good.

- (II) **Arg. 2:** “That power which is contrary to law, and is evil and tyrannical, can tie none to subjection, but is a mere tyrannical power and unlawful; and if it tie not to subjection, it may lawfully be resisted. But the power of the king, abused to the destruction of laws, religion, and subjects, is a power contrary to law, evil, and tyrannical, and tyeth no man to subjection : wickedness by no imaginable reason can oblige any man. Obligation to suffer of wicked men falleth under no commandment of God, except in our Saviour. A passion, as such, is not formally commanded, I mean a physical passion, such as to be killed. God hath not said to me in any moral law, Be thou killed, tortured, beheaded ; but only, Be thou patient, if God deliver thee to wicked men's hands, to suffer these things.”

Summary: A tyrannical power is an unlawful power, and if it is unlawful, does not bind anyone to subject themselves to it. And if they are not bound to submit to it, they may resist it. God doesn't call His people anywhere to submit to torture or death at the hands of the government.

- (III) **Arg. 3:** “There is not a stricter obligation moral betwixt king and people than betwixt parents and children, master and servant, patron

and clients, husband and wife, the lord and the vassal, between the pilot of a ship and the passengers, the physician and the sick, the doctor and the scholars, but the law granteth, (l. Minime 35, de Relig. et sumpt. funer,) if these betray their trust committed to them, they may be resisted: if the father turn distracted, and arise to kill his sons may violently apprehend him, and bind his hands, and spoil him of his weapons; for in that he is not a father.....The servant may resist the master if he attempts unjustly kill him, so may the wife do to the husband; if the pilot should wilfully run the ship on a rock to destroy himself and his passengers, they might violently thrust him from the helm. Every tyrant is a furious man, and is morally distracted, as Althusius said, Polit. c. 28, n. 30, and seq.”

Summary: Our obligation to submit to the king is no stronger than that of a child to submit to its parents, a servant to his master, a wife to her husband, etc. But if these turn on those under their authority to harm them, they have the right to defend themselves by taking away their weapons and binding them.

(IV) **Arg. 4:** “That which is given as a blessing, and a favour, and a screen, between the people's liberty and their bondage, cannot be a given of God as a bondage and slavery to the people. But the power of king is given as a blessing and favour God to defend the poor and needy, to preserve both tables of the law, and to keep the people in their liberties from oppressing and treading one upon another. But so it is, that if such a power be given of God to a king, by which, actu primo, he is invested of God to do acts of tyranny, and so to do them, that to resist him in the most innocent way, which is self-defence, must be a resisting of God, and rebellion against the king, his deputy ; then hath God given a royal power as uncontrollable by mortal men, by any violence, as if God himself were immediately and personally resisted, when the king is resisted, and so this power shall be a power to waste and destroy irresistibly, and so in itself a plague and a curse; for it cannot be ordained both according to the intention and genuine formal effect and intrinsical operation of the power, to preserve the tables of the law, religion and liberty, subjects and laws, and also to destroy the same. But it is taught by royalists that this power is for tyranny, as well as for peaceable government; because to resist this royal power put forth in acts either ways, either in acts of tyranny or just government, is to resist the ordinance of God, as royalists say, from Rom. xiii. 1-3. And we know, to resist God's ordinances and God's deputy, formaliter, as his deputy, is to resist God himself,(1 Sam. viii. 7; Matt.x. 40,) as if God were doing personally these acts that the king is doing; and it importeth as much as the King of kings doth these acts in and through the tyrant. Now, it is blasphemy to think or say, that when a king is drinking the blood of innocents, and wasting the church of

God, that God, if he were personally present, would commit these same acts of tyranny, (God avert such blasphemy !) and that God in and through the king, as his lawful deputy and vicegerent in these acts of tyranny, is wasting the poor church of God. If it be said, in these sinful acts of tyranny, he is not God's formal vicegerent, but only in good and lawful acts of government, yet he is not to be resisted in these acts, not because the acts are just and good, but because of the dignity of his royal person. Yet this must prove that those who resist the king in these acts of tyranny, must resist no ordinance of God, but only resist him who is the Lord's deputy, though not as the Lord's deputy. What absurdity is there in that more than to disobey him, refusing active obedience to him who is the Lord's deputy, not as the, Lord's deputy, but as a man commanding besides his master's warrant?"

Summary: The acts of the king are not the acts of God. To resist the king in acts of tyranny is not to resist God. God would never approve of unlawful and wicked acts.

(V) **Arg. 5:** "That which is inconsistent with the care and providence of God in giving a king to his church is not to be taught. Now God's end in giving a king to his church, as the feeding, safety, preservation, and the peaceable and quiet life of his church. (1 Tim. ii. 2 ; Isa. xlix. 23 ; Psal. lxxix. 71). But God should cross his own end in the same act of giving a king, if he should provide a king, who, by office, were to suppress robbers, murderers, and all oppressors and wasters in his holy mount, and yet should give an irresistible power to one crowned lion, a king, who may kill ten hundred thousand protestants for their religion, in an ordinary providence; and they are by an ordinary law of God to give their throats to his emissaries and bloody executioners. If any say the king will not be so cruel, - I believe it; because, actu secundo, it is not possibly in his power to be so cruel. We owe thanks to his good will that he killeth not so many, but no thanks to the nature and genuine intrinsical end of a king, who hath power from God to kill all these, and that without resistance made by any mortal man. Yea, no thanks (God avert blasphemy!) to God's ordinary providence, which (if royalists may be believed) putteth no bar upon the unlimited power of a man inclined to sin, and abuse his power to so much cruelty. Some may say, the same absurdity doth follow if the king should turn papist, and the parliament all were papists. In that case there might be so many martyrs for the truth to death, and God should put no bar of providence upon this power, then more than now; and yet, in that case, the king and parliament should be judges given of God, actu primo, and by virtue of their office obliged to preserve the people in peace and godliness. But I answer, If God gave a lawful official power to king and parliament to work the same cruelty upon

millions of martyrs, and it should be unlawful for them by arms to defend themselves, I should then think that king and parliament were both *ex officio*, by virtue of their office, and *actu primo*, judges and fathers, and also by that same office, murderers and butchers,- which were a grievous aspersion to the unspotted providence of God.”

Summary: God would be crossing His own purpose to give a king who is supposed to protect, but at the same time give him the right to destroy men for their religion and forbid men to resist him.

(VI) **Arg. 6:** “If the estates of a kingdom give the power to a king, it is their own power in the fountain ; and if they give it for their own good, they have power to judge when it is used against themselves, and for their evil, and so power to limit and resist the power that they gave. Now, that they may take away this power, is clear in Athaliah's case. It is true she was a tyrant without a title, and had not the right of heaven to the crown, yet she had, in men's court, a title. For supposing all the royal seed to be killed, and the people consent, we cannot say that, for these six years or thereabout, she was no magistrate: that there were none on the throne of David at this time: that she was not to be obeyed as God's deputy. But grant that she was no magistrate; yet when Jehoash is brought forth to be crowned, it was a controversy to the states to whom the crown should belong. 1. Athaliah was in possession. 2. Jehoash himself being but seven years old, could not be judge. 3. It might be doubted if Joash was the true son of Ahaziah, and if he was not killed with the rest of the blood royal. Two great adversaries say with us ; Hugo Grotius.....saith he dare not condemn this, if the lesser part of the people, and every one of them indifferently, should defend themselves against a tyrant, *ultimo necessitatis proesidio*. The case of Scotland, when we were blocked up by sea and land with armies: the case of England, when the king, induced by prelates, first attempted to bring an army to cut off parliament, and then gather an army, and fortified York and invaded Hull, to make the militia his own, sure is considerable. Barclay saith, the people hath....a power to defend themselves against prodigious cruelty. The case of England and Ireland, now invaded by bloody rebels of Ireland, is also worthy of consideration. I could cite hosts more.

Summary: If the power of the king to rule is given to him by the people, then they have the right to judge that king if he uses his power against them, as can be seen in the case of Athaliah.

(iii) The last situation in which we may take away the life of another is in self-defense.

(a) Moses writes, “If the thief is caught while breaking in, and is struck so

that he dies, there will be no bloodguiltiness on his account” (Exodus 22:2).

- (b) If someone attacks you or someone else, you have the right to defend yourself and that other person, even to the point of killing the other person, if necessary.

3. What are some of the practical ways we should protect the lives of others, besides not killing them unjustly?
 - a. If someone is in danger of dying because of lack of food or exposure, we should help them.
 - (i) Jesus will say on the day of Judgment to the goats, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me” (Matt. 25:41-43).
 - (ii) James writes, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?” (James 2:15-16).
 - (iii) We should provide for their needs as much as we can.
 - b. We should also do nothing that would injure them. What are some of the ways we can injure our neighbor short of killing them?
 - (i) We can injure them through our words.
 - (a) “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).
 - (b) “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18).
 - (c) Paul writes, “But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:15).
 - (d) What does the Lord call us to do instead? We should use our words to build others up. Peter writes, “To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, ‘Let him who means to love life and see good days refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile. And let him seek peace and pursue it’” (1 Peter 3:8-11).
 - (ii) If there are employees under our authority, we should not overwork them.
 - (a) Moses writes, “And they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all *kinds* of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them” (Exodus 1:14).
 - (b) What does the Lord call us to do instead? Do what we can to make their load lighter.

- (iii) We should never strike our neighbor, unless in self-defense.
 - (a) If we injure them unjustly in any way, we are responsible to make restitution for whatever they might lose. I told you about the Puritan in the seventeenth century who was out hunting in the woods when he saw something move in a bush. He raised his crossbow and shot, only to find that he had killed a man, who had a wife and children. The only righteous thing the man could do was to support them for the rest of their lives, since he had taken away their only means of support.
 - (b) What are we called to do instead? We are called to protect and defend our neighbor.

- c. We should also not injure them in our hearts.
 - (i) We do this through sinful anger and hatred:
 - (a) Jesus said, “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, ‘Raca,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell” (Matt. 5:22).
 - (b) And John writes, “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).

 - (ii) We do this through a desire for revenge when someone has done something wrong to us. Paul writes, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath *of God*, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).
 - (iii) What should we do instead? Paul writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph. 4:31).

- 4. But what about ourselves? What does this commandment tell us about what we should do and not to do ourselves?
 - a. First, we should not kill ourselves.
 - (i) If it is wrong to take away the life of someone else unjustly, it is also wrong to take away our own lives. We must not murder ourselves.
 - (ii) When the Philippian jailer was about to kill himself because he thought his prisoners had escaped, Paul stopped him (Acts 16:28).
 - (iii) What about a professing Christian who commits suicide? Can they be saved? It may be hard to understand how a person who really knows Christ could fall this far away from him to kill himself, but we would have to say that if that person was truly a child of God, then even that sin will not destroy their soul. It will still be covered by the blood of Christ.

 - b. Is there anything else this commandment tells us we shouldn’t do to ourselves? We shouldn’t do anything that we know is harmful to our health.
 - (i) We shouldn’t eat or drink too much. Solomon writes, “Do not be with

heavy drinkers of wine, *or* with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe *a man* with rags” (Proverbs 23:20-21). Certainly don’t eat anything you know is harmful.

- (ii) We shouldn’t work too much. Too much work can kill you slowly.
- (iii) On the other hand, we shouldn’t recreate too much. Too much recreation, or becoming addicted to pleasure, can make you weak and also make you poor, both of which can threaten your life.
- (iv) We shouldn’t take too many chances in our recreations. Some people like skydiving or skiing or bungee-jumping or rock climbing. But don’t take unnecessary risks with your life. Too much sun can even kill you. We are commanded to take care of ourselves, as well as others.
- (v) This commandment teaches us that we need to take care of ourselves and other people. Let’s bear that in mind as we make decisions throughout our lives.

VII. The seventh commandment. What is the seventh commandment? “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14).

A. What does the commandment mean?

- 1. It forbids all unlawful sexual relations: fornication, adultery, incest, prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality, etc.
- 2. It forbids anything that contributes to unlawful relations for ourselves and others.
- 3. It also forbids unchaste thoughts and desires.

B. What does it tell us to do, and what not to do?

- 1. It tells us to be pure in all we do.
 - a. If we are married, we must be faithful to our spouses: no adultery, we may not put them away for anything less than unrepentant adultery. If we divorce on unbiblical grounds and marry someone else, or our spouse does, then we either commit or have become the cause of someone else committing adultery.
 - b. If we are not married, we must be pure in our conduct: no fornication, or any form of sexual contact. Of course rape, incest, prostitution and homosexuality are all forbidden.
 - c. If we are single, and of marriageable age, and do not have the gift of singleness, we must pray for a spouse. Paul writes, “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:9). In the meantime, we need to fight against sexual lust. Beware of idle time.
 - d. Whether we are married or not, it calls us not to lust after another person. What does it mean to lust? To look at or think about someone with sexual desire. Jesus said, “But I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt. 5:28).
 - e. We must avoid all places and things that would promote lust. Don’t go to the beach, or even a swimming pool in mixed company. It can cause lust. Avoid

- magazines, pictures, movies which portray immorality.
- f. Avoid company that provokes lustful thoughts: immoral unbelievers, or even professing Christians that violate these standards.
2. It tells us that we must be careful to help others remain pure.
 - a. We must not say any words or communicate through our actions anything that will cause another person to stumble: dirty jokes, sexual innuendo, flirting, etc.
 - b. We must not wear any clothing which will stumble someone or cause them to lust: be careful with your formal and casual clothing, don't wear too short or too tight clothing, bikinis or swimsuits.