

The Divine Gift of Human Life

If we consider the creation of human life by God in Genesis 1:26-2:6, we find that human life is a precious gift from God for several reasons.

Human life is a result of God's sovereign choice. God said, "Let us create man in our image, after our likeness." God did not have to create humanity. He chose to do so, as the crowning glory of His creation. God made human life important in the very choice of its creation.

Human life reflects God's image. It shows God's natural likeness or personality. Human beings, unlike all other creatures, express choice, are aware of themselves, and have the ability to reason. These traits are shared by God and man. Man also mirrors God's moral likeness, by knowing the difference between right and wrong. Animals do things out of instinct; humans do things out of choice, and will give an account for their actions. Joni Eareckson Tada—the well-known Christian artist, quadriplegic and disability advocate—writes, "Created in the image of God, humans are imprinted with transcendent qualities—beyond-this-world characteristics such as compassion, kindness, self-control, and patience. It is these qualities that place us worlds apart from brute beasts" (*Christian Research Journal*, Spring 1996, p. 17).

Human life fulfills God's purposes. God gave Adam and Eve a position. In Genesis 1:26, 28 we find that humans are to have dominion or rule over creation. God also gave them a job to work out the position. Eden was not a place of idleness, but a place of God-given employment. In Ephesians 1 we find the even greater goal of human existence, in that "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," (Ephesians 1:4), and we "should be to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:12). Mankind is to reflect God's glory.

Human life is a personal work of God. Genesis tells us that God took a special interest in this aspect of his creation. The other creatures were created by the mere word of God (if indeed it can be called "mere"). Simply the fact that God personally made man out of the dust of the earth has of tremendous importance.

Further in the Scriptures, ***God upholds the value of human life*** in the Ten Commandments. He says, "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13, NKJV). This is an all-encompassing directive. It includes homicide (murder of

another), suicide (murder of self), regicide (murder of a ruler), feticide (murder of a fetus), infanticide (murder of babies), and genocide (murder of a whole people). The Sixth Commandment also presumes the positive duty to do all the good we can to ourselves and others both physically and spiritually.

Human life was redeemed for eternity by Jesus Christ on the Cross. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8, NKJV). Christ did not die for dogs, horses, whales, or snail darters. He died for sinful, lost, degraded human souls.

What does all this mean today? It means that the Christian must stand for the inherent value of every human life at whatever point of existence, and the sovereignty of God over that life. Romans 14:7-8 says, "For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord" (NIV). This is the only view of humanity that keeps us from being exploited by tyrants, and keeps people—whether unborn children or Alzheimer's victims—from being destroyed for anyone's convenience.

The Christian must stand for the value of those who are no longer productive in society's eyes. This includes older persons, the mentally retarded, the handicapped, and those in chronic pain. The world says our value depends on how much we can produce (functionalism).

The Bible teaches that our value depends on God's grace and mercy in creating us and sustaining our existence. Human life is therefore valuable in itself; its value does not depend on achievement, quality, or any other human standard. It has value simply because God made it so.