

Session #17: Animal Rights (Detailed Notes)

"A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel" (Prov 12:10)

Purpose of this Session: To Present a Balanced Biblical Treatment of Purpose for Animals and Man's Responsibility towards Them

- o Why God created animals
- o How man is to treat animals?
- o Address whether animals do have any rights
- o The current animal rights movement
- o What we should be doing if anything

Basics: "Right" = "that which a person has a just claim to; power, privilege, etc. that belongs to a person by law, nature, or tradition" (Webster's)

- o Biblically, we have a right to death, since we have earned it (**Rom 6:23**)
- o Our rights in this country are those defined by law - a consequence of Biblical commands (prohibitions) such as "Thou shalt not kill" - law protects our right to live
- o More accurate to say animals have legal protections, not rights in the human sense
- o Rights, as used here do not imply a commensurate obligation or duty to protect or exercise it (Man has a right to dominion by God's direct command, also protective rights)

1. Introduction: Like so many issues around us, Christians have sometimes trivialized the Biblical understanding and treatment of Animals

- a. Why is this a topic of discussion? Why should we care?
 - o "Animal Rights" movement has gained significant notoriety and presence in the public
 - o There are major agenda items for the "Animal Rights" movement that could have significant implications for us (make them equal to man legally)
 - o Many Christians have turned away from a Biblical view of animals ("They taste good...")
 - o This, like all other topics, must be measured by the Biblical standard
- b. In a fallen world, there are at least two fundamental abuses and errors (**diagram showing spectrum**):
 - o Viciousness and cruelty of man towards the creation (destruction, abuse, neglect)
 - o Falsely elevating the creation to godhead
- c. A consistent, Biblically based approach to the treatment of animals is not commonly understood
 - o By definition, an animal does not have "rights" in the sense that we do, but they do have derivative protections
 - o We have a stewardship responsibility towards animals
 - o There are profound reasons for the existence of animals

2. The Bible has much to say about why God Created Animals and the Responsibility of Man towards them

- a. Man is pre-eminent over, and entirely separate from animals (**See Handout: Animals of the Bible**)
 - o Only man is created in God's image (**Gen 1:26-27**); therefore:
 - o Man intrinsically superior to animals in nature & in relation to God (Matt 6:26; 12:12)
 - o Man is much farther above animals than they above plants, and they above minerals
 - o **Diagram showing:** God - Man - Animals - Plants - Minerals (hierarchy)
 - o Man is capable of fearing the Lord and shunning evil (wisdom), but this is not given to animals (**Job 28:20-21**)
 - o Man has been given an intrinsically different nature from animals (**1 Cor 15:39**)
 - o Man's called to be a good steward of animals & rule over them as God's vice regent (**Gen 1:28**)
 - o Subdue the entire earth (has dominion over animals as part of the earth)
 - o Rule over fish, birds and every living creature on the ground (active involvement)
 - o Man named all the birds and living creatures (**Gen 2:19-20**) showing great insight into each animal, and authority over them, also verifying he is totally different in nature from him (God separately provided a suitable helper - equal worth)

- o All animals are given into man's hands (do with as he sees fit, rule over them)(**Gen 9:2; Prov 12:10; 27:23-27; Psalm 8:6-7; James 3:7**)
- o All animals are given to man for food ("everything that lives and moves..." **Gen 9:3**)
- o Therefore:
 - o Man has dominion over all animals in accordance with the desires of God
 - o Man is unique in his relationship to God, animals do not have this same relationship
 - o Man is not just a superior animal as evolutionary theology and pantheism would teach ("The Naked Ape" - Desmond Morris, 1967)
- o But, with the fall came man's abuse of his position, and his view of animals (two extremes):
 - o Cruelty towards them: wanton destruction (killing for pleasure); torturing; killing for trivial reasons (ivory); unnecessary experimentation; burdening beyond abilities
 - o Elevating to same level (or higher) than mankind: worshiping animals; reincarnation; ascribing rights to; believing indwelt with god just as man
 - o Also, with the fall, all living creatures (air, land and sea) will fear and have dread of man (**Gen 9:2**) - fighting the exercise of his dominion calling
- b. Are animals important to God? How do we know that?
 - o First and foremost - because God created them!
 - o God populated the skies, land and seas with them, blessed them and pronounced them "good". Next to man, they are the highest form of God's creation
 - o God commanded man to rule righteously over them (care for them - **Gen 1:26,28**)
 - o God miraculously sustained the existence of animals through the flood (**Gen 6:17-21; 7:1-16**)
 - o God shows compassion even for cattle (Ninevah; **Jonah 4:6-11**)
 - o God endowed them with unique characteristics and watches over them (**Job 38:39-39:30**) (examples: lions; ravens; goats; deer; wild donkey; wild ox; ostrich; horse; hawk; eagle)
 - o God cares for and feeds even the birds of the air (**Matt 6:26**) and cares for every sparrow that falls from the sky (**Matt 10:29-31**)
 - o God mercifully provides laws to protect animals from being abused (see "c" below)
 - o He created them for a reason (see sections "d" & "e"), not by chance, or an afterthought
- c. Why did God create animals?
 - o To praise Him (**Psalm 145:21, 148:7,10; Psalm 150:6**) (*Doxology*) honor God (**Isa 43:20**)
 - o Illustrate God's characteristics (creativity; beauty; variety; complexity; perfection of purpose and function; order even within a cursed world)
 - o Show our uniqueness in all the creation (**Gen 2:19-20**)
 - o For our enjoyment (beauty; companionship (pets); to marvel at; even for our humor (cats))
 - o To teach dominion principles:
 - o Children learn with pets (wisdom, compassion, love to lower life form, benevolence)
 - o Children learn to be tender and gentle towards animals - the only creatures more vulnerable and helpless than themselves
 - o Letting children inflict pain on animals can lead to a callousness towards people
 - o Taming them takes time, patience, wisdom, firmness - the same as the Lord uses to discipline us (sanctification process)
 - o To assist man in his work for his benefit (**Prov 14:4; Gen 8:6-12**), an instrument to help man (Elijah and the ravens - **1 Kings 17:1-7**), and a means of transportation
 - o For our food and clothing (**Gen 9:3; 3:21**)
 - o As an instrument of:
 - o Judgment (Elisha (**2 Kings 2:23-25**); **Prov 30:17; Num 11:4-33; 21:4-9; 1 Cor 10:9**; plagues on Egypt; feasting of dead bodies; Jezebel)
 - o Fear (**Prov 22:13; 26:13**)
 - o Correction (Baalam (**2 Peter 2:16**); Jonah (**Jonah 1:17-2:10; Matt 12:40**); Cock crowing (Peter))(**Prov 30:17**)(moths eating clothes - **James 5:2**)
 - o Temporary atonement for our own sin until the coming of the Redeemer (**Heb 10:1-4;11**), however, they are insufficient to remove man's sin
 - o Demonstrating righteousness (**Prov 12:10; Daniel Heb 11:33**)
 - o Demonstrating humility (Christ riding on a donkey (**John 12:12-15**))

- o God to humble us (**Job 40:15-41:34**)
 - o God to test us (**1 Cor 15:32** Paul fighting wild beasts in Ephesus)
 - o To demonstrate Jesus was sovereign over wild animals also (**Mark 1:12** (wild animals); **Matt 17:24-27** (fish with coin); **John 21:5-11** (catch of fish))
 - o To adorn Christ's character (born in stable, rode on donkey (**Matt 21:1-7**))(Rev 5:5 Lion of Judah; White horse - **Rev 19:11-14**)(Lamb of God - **John 1:29**)
 - o To authenticate to the world God's chosen vessels (**Acts 28:3-6**)
 - o To provide comfort in times of stress/illness, even measure of healing or relief (**Luke 16:19-21**)
 - o To teach us (**See Handout: "What Animals Teach Us"**)
- d. Are there pets in the Bible?
- o Nathan rebuked David with example of ewe lamb like a daughter in a family (**2 Sam 12:1-6**)
 - o The Lord rebuked Job by asking "Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls?" referring to Leviathan (**Job 41:1-5**)
 - o Dogs eating crumbs tossed to them, or falling from the table (**Matt 15:25-27**)
 - o Passover lamb came to be taken into the home so affection would grow for it prior to its sacrifice - costly price of sin

3. Animals do not have rights as man does, but they do have derivative protections based upon God's mercy to them

- a. "Right" = "that which a person has a just claim to; power, privilege, etc. that belongs to a person by law, nature, or tradition" (Webster's)
- o Man deserves death and eternal separation from God
 - o God's promises are a gift to us, we have the privilege of claiming those promises, it is a right granted to us, but not one we can demand because of our own merit
 - o Laws establish in this world our "rights" that will be protected, these in general reflect God's commands ("Thou shalt not murder" - right to life)
- b. Animals have not been granted rights by God, but are protected to some degree just as we are
- o They're to be respected, not abused, they've been created by God for our benefit and pleasure
 - o Animals have no more "right" to live than we do
 - o Since Eden, higher species killing a lower species of animal for the survival has been justifiable
 - o They are not to be crossbred (**Lev 19:19; Gen 1:20-25**)
 - o Vivisection: "Medical research consisting of surgical operations or other experiments performed on living animals to study the structure and function of living organs and parts, and to investigate the effects of diseases and therapy" (Webster's)
 - o Just as we have legal rights (Thou shalt not kill - right to defend ourselves; Thou shalt not steal - right to property; Thou shalt honor your father and mother - right to exercise parental authority; etc.); animals have derived protections (legal rights) based upon God's commands to us in our treatment of them (Paul appealed to Caesar - he exercised rights under Roman law)
- c. Is cruelty to animals forbidden?
- o Examples of cruelty?:
 - o Balaam whipping his donkey (**Num 22:27**) - unjustified
 - o King David hamstring captured Philistine horses (**2 Sam 8:3-4; 1 Chron 18:4**)
 - o God destroyed most animals in the flood (**Gen 6:7,17**) also land of Canaan because of the defilement by man (**Lev 18:23-24; 20:15-16;23**)
 - o Man's sin so corrupted the land that it had to be purged completely
 - o Destruction of animals as well as man showed the depths to which the consequences and depravity of sin ran
 - o Christ sending demons into pigs, they in turn running to their death? (**Matt 8:30-34**)
 - o This incident brought glory to Christ - recognition of His deity and power
 - o Similar to the lame man - not normative for others
 - o The demons asked for it
 - o Jews would think this OK: demons and swine equally detestable to them;
 - o Pigs kept by local Gentile communities in NT times?
 - o What about mules in the Queen Mine (Bisbee, AZ)?
 - o God commands mercy towards animals

- o Wandering ox or donkey is to be returned to owner (**Ex 23:4; Deu 22:1-3**)
- o Help a donkey that has fallen under its load (enemy or not)(**Ex 23:5; Deu 22:4**)
- o Sabbath rest is for beasts of burden also (**Ex 23:12; Deu 5:12-15**)
- o Do not take a mother bird, only the young (or eggs)(**Deu 22:6-7**)
- o Do not treat an animal as a sexual object (**Lev 18:23; 20:15-16**)
- o Needs of animals are to be taken care of even on the Sabbath (necessity: **Luke 13:15; mercy: Luke 14:5**)(**Matt 12:11-12**)
- o Even beasts of burden are worthy of benefit from their work - not to be muzzled (**Deu 25:4; 1 Cor 9:9; 1 Tim 5:18**)
- o One sign of a righteous man is his concern and care for his animal (**Prov 12:10**)
 - o A righteous man will understand the role and needs of the animals he rules over, and treat them accordingly
 - o An evil man only cares for the animal as long as it meets his needs, when it no longer does, he will destroy it
- d. Why were there clean and unclean animals? (**Lev 11:1-47; Deut 14:3-20**)(first mention: **Gen 7:2**)
 - o The OT does not provide an explanation for why some animals are clean and some are unclean
 - o Clean and unclean were defined from each great domain (air, land, sea)
 - o Reasonable inferences have been suggested:
 - o The laws were symbolic of spiritual cleansing and set Israel apart from the surrounding nations - they could not co-mingle with them (no comparable prohibitions found in other contemporary nations) - **Acts 10** declares all food clean, the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles was removed
 - o Protect God's people from disease ("none of these diseases..." (**Ex 15:26**)); pigs carried trichinosis, rabbits spread tularemia, mud burrowing sea creatures (eels, clams...) more prone to parasites than free swimming fish, scavengers (falcons, vultures, etc.) and vermin could carry disease, etc.
 - o For economic reasons: horses not reasonable for food since live off grain, camels take 17 yrs to mature (live to 45) therefore not economical for food
 - o Prohibit idolatrous practices of the nations around them (**Ex 23:19; 34:26; Deu 14:21**) which are known to be Ugaritic
 - o Clean and unclean animal laws served to separate the Jews from the world, protect them from diseases (unknown mechanisms to them), and to test their faith through practice

4. Current Animal Rights Movement is Grounded in Eastern Mysticism and Places Animals on the same Level as Man

- a. Part of a larger Ecological/Environmental Movement
 - o "Shallow Ecology" (fight against pollution and resource depletion with a primary objective being the health and affluence of people)
 - o "Deep Ecology" (belief that all life is fundamentally one; views derive from mysticism and intuition; often advocates are pantheists (God is everything) or embrace Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age philosophies, evolutionary thinking, with man no more important than any other species - no distinction between man and nature)
 - o Actual movement is an amalgamation of a large number of different beliefs and philosophical positions that deny human dignity (image of God)(elevate animals, denigrate humans)
- b. If all life is basically one - then supposedly one species has no greater claim on life than another
 - o Man is only an animal, one part of an evolutionary continuum, and as such has some characteristics better and some worse than other animals (no intrinsic superiority!)
 - o This logic is used to argue against killing animals for food, medical research or pleasure
 - o "Speciesism" (Peter Singer - 1975) "a prejudice or attitude of bias toward the interest of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species"
 - o Many equate principles that object to "racism", "sexism" "and anti-Semitism" as the same ones to apply for "speciesism"
 - o Belief in essential equality between human & other animal life (moral significance the same as between blacks and whites etc.) - thus should be equal treatment
 - o Equal treatment between species (biological egalitarianism) based on evolutionary continuum

- o theology, however - evolution also used to support racism (Hitler - survival of the fittest)
- o Concept that: Cannot respect own selves if do not respect all of life
- c. Tactics Used (also by evangelical environmentalists):
 - o Appeal to emotionalism and sentimentality (Greenpeace: poster of baby seals being clubbed to death (to meet a need or a selfish want?); Internet graphic pictures of medical experiments; sometimes staged setups to deceive others
 - o Misrepresentation of facts, dis-information
 - o Using unsupported statistics to convey the impression of a crisis (hence generate support for legislative action)
 - o Number of species becoming extinct each year: 3/day; 1000/day; 8000/year; 35,000/year; 75,000/year (all in the literature; note (1))
 - o Al Gore (note (3)) "species...are now vanishing around the world one thousand times faster than at any time in the past 65 million years" Shows pre-industrial age rate of ~1/century, present ~8,000/year, expected to be ~70,000/year by 2000, also claims ~100/day currently (all in the same book)
 - o However, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) indicates from field evidence that extinctions in recent decades is slight to nonexistent (note (2))
 - o Using legal system to create laws protecting animals (Beverly Hills ordinance to label how animals killed - failed); prevent torture and cruel conditions; lawsuits
 - o Equating animals with humans relative to importance
 - o Using exaggerated or false statistics to sway public opinion about state of animal conditions (Gorillas have 98% of the same DNA as humans)
 - o Organizing groups to lobby and publicize animal conditions (PETA; etc.)
 - o Intimidate those that do not agree with them (shouting, picketing, boycotting, name calling)
 - o Personal attack by ridicule, sarcasm or questioning of motives; misrepresentation of critics' views; moral condemnation over matters of theoretical or empirical disagreement (note (1))
- d. Other factors causing confusion in the debate (note (1))
 - o Taking rational criticism as a personal attack
 - o Attacking someone's credentials or qualifications instead of the substance of arguments
 - o Appeals to majority beliefs (polls, popular vote determining truth vice science)
 - o Intimidation by supposedly scholarly work - who can question?
 - o Unbalanced views of a situation

5. Discussion Questions, See Handout: Animal Rights: Discussion Questions

6. What Should We be doing, if Anything?

- o Engage the question as it comes up in conversation - Don't trivialize!!!
- o Address the fundamental issues
 - o Animals are not created in the image of God, and hence are not the same order of creature
 - o We are commanded to protect and show mercy towards animals
 - o There are profound reasons why God created animals (see above)
 - o We are to be good stewards of animals, but not fall into either of two errors:
 - o Cruelty and abuse of them
 - o Idolizing them (equal level or higher than man)
 - o Point out Eastern theological roots to much of the animal rights movement
- o Raise our children to respect and care for animals of all kinds, teach them to look for characteristics reminding us of God; man's traits; living parables, etc.
- o Resist laws that elevate animals to the status of man (idolatry)
- o Be careful what organizations we support

Notes:

1. "Where Garden Meets Wilderness - The Evangelical Entry Into the Environmental Debate," E. Calvin Beisner; 1997
2. "Tropical Deforestation and Species Extinction," ed. T.C. Whitmore & J. A. Sayer; xvii, 93, 96; 1992
3. "Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit," Al Gore

