



24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. 25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. Gen 1:24-28)

Dominion! Ah, yes, a greatly neglected responsibility of mankind. God has dominion over each of us and, in fact, all of His Creation. How would you feel if God neglected our care, or bore no concern for our well-being? But God gave a responsibility to mankind to care for the animals and other creatures of His making, but how woefully short we have fallen in that regard! Dominion does not mean ownership, but to care for.

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I never liked CATS perhaps because I never really KNEW them. Growing up, I always had dogs for pets, and I loved them. Somehow, I got the notion that cats were overly sissified and shamelessly presumptuous in their view of humans. But God knew that I wanted a cat long before He told me of the desire. God is like that, isn't He?

Anna and Benjamin – those are the names of my two cats with which God surprised me some three years back. It was the 1st of May almost three years ago when my wife, Debbie, and I were making our morning walk. The day was cold and dreary, and there was a light drizzle of rain. As we approached a large undergrowth of honeysuckles beside the road, my attention was drawn to a large hawk in the tree top overlooking the street and screeching loudly. A few steps later, I discovered what was attracting the hawk's attention. There were two small kittens, smaller than a man's hand, who had come out of their nativity from under the honeysuckles. One had fallen off the curb and was too small to get back up. His sister was anxiously looking on from the safety of the vines. I knew that the hawk would carry them as prey back to his nest if I left them

beside the road; so we took them home with the intentions of finding a suitable family for them in a couple of weeks.

Needless to say, two weeks was too long for us not to get overly attached to these two furry creatures of God. We kept them and made them a genuine part of our family. We love them as family, too. We named the boy, Benjamin, after the son of Jacob and Rachel that was also born beside a roadside on the way to Bethlehem Ramah. The girl, we named Anna after the faithful lady of Luke 2:36. Anna is a perfect little lady – a bit shy and quite demurring. They have a well thought out division of duties which they observe every morning. It is Benjamin's responsibility to awaken me from sleep for the purpose of getting their morning breakfast. Benjamin is well suited for the task since he REALLY likes to eat. It could be said that Benjamin 'lives to eat' while Anna 'eats to live.' His method in accomplishing the difficult task of getting me out of bed is to gently nibble my fingers. If this is not successful, he then places a very soft, furry paw on my arm or face and proceeds to extend his sharp claws just enough to get my attention. During this ordeal, Anna waits patiently and looking on from the hall. Mission accomplished – breakfast is served.

Anna's duty after breakfast is to gain a means of departure into the yard outside where both love to play. She comes and sits at the foot of my easy chair and simply stares at me for the longest. That usually does not work, so she then meows in the most pitiful manner imaginable – over and over again. In the meantime, Benjamin keeps his distance simply looking on. It works, and the two are set free to roam the yard.

No one would value these cats as anything other than worthless, except Debbie and me. We love them and would not take any amount of money for them. We take great joy in watching these two play lion and tiger around the sofa and chests of our living room at night. Being left in a home empty of our children in the autumn of our years, God has given us these two to focus our love upon. I see God's hand in all of this.

Like Benjamin and Anna, we all were lost by the wayside, helpless to save ourselves while the Devil (hawk) looked on in hunger for our souls. *8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.* (1 Peter 5:8-9) Had God not intervened, we would have perished there. But God did intervene. He sent His ministers and witnesses to inform us of a safe haven in the Lord Jesus Christ. When no one else could shelter us, He did so at the cost of the suffering and shame of the cross.

Just as we chose Anna and Benjamin, God has chosen us. *4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* (Eph 1:4-5) Anna and Benjamin were as good as dead and unable to choose my wife and I; so we chose them, and saved them from a terrible fate. We, too, were dead in trespasses and sins. A dead man can make no decisions or choices unless quickened (made alive) by the Lord. *1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)* *6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.* (Eph 2:1-9)

Like Anna and Benjamin, we make our petitions known to God at first light for our daily bread. If we receive no benefit, we carry the prayers a bit further by gnawing on the fingers of God (perseverance in prayer). The next important thing to daily sustenance is Liberty. Our continual prayers give us Liberty and healing for our land. *25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* James 1:25) *"14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land"* (2 Chron 7:14)

When I look at the creatures God has made, I am profoundly amazed at His artistic creativity. They seem perfect in their features. He has equipped each with gorgeous and luxuriant apparel. Make no mistake, God loves every creature of His making. They answer much more perfectly to His natural law than man answers to His Moral Law.

Cruelty and neglect for any creature – man or beast – is a great sin in the eyes of the Lord. Of course, human life is the crowning achievement of God's creative genius, but the animals He has prepared for our benefit and enjoyment must not be overlooked for great value either. Remember, the creation of the animal kingdom predates that of man, so God must value them very highly. He pronounced them to be very "GOOD" and placed them in the same beautiful Garden at Eden just as He did man. Man was so remiss in his obligations to God that God, with obvious sorrow, found it necessary to sacrifice one of His beloved animals to provide a covering for the sins and nakedness of Adam and Eve. Doubtless, the sacrifice of this innocent animal was a reminder to God of the future sacrifice of His only Begotten Son as a covering and remission for our sins.

It may go well with us if we make friends with the animal kingdom so that in that Day to come, they will remember our good deeds to the Master and not our undeserved cruelty: *6 The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. 7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.* (Isaiah 11:6-9)