

D-LIFE BOOT CAMP

Training for a lifestyle
of discipleship.



Keeping it Real

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Pastor Dale L. Crawley Sr.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19-20

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Ethics of Capital Punishment

Theme Scripture: *Genesis 9:6* – **"Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind."**

Introduction: What Is Capital Punishment?

- **Definition:** The legally authorized killing of someone as punishment for a crime, often reserved for severe offenses like murder or treason.
- **Objective of Study:** To explore what the Bible says about capital punishment and how Christians can think biblically about this issue.

1. Biblical Foundations of Capital Punishment

a. The Sanctity of Human Life

- *Genesis 1:27:* Humans are made in God's image, which gives life its unique value.
- *Genesis 9:6:* After the flood, God establishes a principle of justice: taking a human life demands accountability because life is sacred.

b. Capital Offenses in the Mosaic Law

- Examples of crimes punishable by death:
 - Premeditated murder (*Exodus 21:12*).
 - Adultery (*Leviticus 20:10*).
 - Blasphemy (*Leviticus 24:16*).
 - Leading others into idolatry (*Deuteronomy 13:5*).

The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder ([Exodus 21:12](#)), kidnapping ([Exodus 21:16](#)), bestiality ([Exodus 22:19](#)), adultery ([Leviticus 20:10](#)), homosexuality ([Leviticus 20:13](#)), being a false prophet ([Deuteronomy 13:5](#)), prostitution and rape ([Deuteronomy 22:24](#)), and several other crimes. However, God often showed mercy when the death penalty was due. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not demand his life be taken ([2 Samuel 11:1-5](#), [14-17](#); [2 Samuel 12:13](#)). Ultimately, every sin we commit should result in the death penalty because the wages of sin is death ([Romans 6:23](#)). Thankfully, God demonstrates His love for us in not condemning us ([Romans 5:8](#)).

- **Purpose of the Law:** To uphold justice, deter sin, and maintain societal order ([Deuteronomy 17:12-13](#)).

2. Grace and Mercy in the Old Testament

While the law was strict, God also demonstrated mercy:

- *Genesis 4:13-15:* God spared Cain after he murdered Abel, marking him for protection.
- *2 Samuel 12:13:* King David was spared despite committing adultery and orchestrating murder.

Reflection Question: How do justice and mercy coexist in God's character?

3. Jesus and Capital Punishment

a. The Woman Caught in Adultery ([John 8:1-11](#))

When the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and asked Him if she should be stoned, Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" ([John 8:7](#)). This should not be used to indicate that Jesus rejected capital punishment in all instances. Jesus was simply exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into breaking the Old Testament law; they did not truly care about the woman being stoned (where was the man who was caught in adultery?) God is the One who instituted capital punishment: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" ([Genesis 9:6](#)). Jesus would support capital punishment in some instances. Jesus also demonstrated

Excerpts from: Christian Ethics. An Introduction to Biblical Moral Reasoning by Wayne Grudem. 2018

Excerpts from: GotQuestions.org

grace when capital punishment was due ([John 8:1-11](#)). The apostle Paul definitely recognized the power of the government to institute capital punishment where appropriate ([Romans 13:1-7](#)).

- Jesus upheld the law but emphasized mercy: *“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.”*
- **Key Point:** Jesus shifted focus from judgment to repentance and grace.

b. Jesus’ Own Death

- Jesus was executed by capital punishment, bearing the sins of humanity.
- His sacrifice demonstrates the ultimate balance of justice (sin’s penalty paid) and mercy (grace extended to all).

4. The Role of Government and Justice

a. New Testament Teaching

- *Romans 13:1-4:* Governing authorities are established by God and bear the “sword” to execute justice.
- *1 Peter 2:13-14:* Christians are called to submit to authorities, who punish wrongdoers.

b. Christian Responsibility

How should a Christian view the death penalty? First, we must remember that God has instituted capital punishment in His Word; therefore, it would be presumptuous of us to think that we could institute a higher standard. God has the highest standard of any being; He is perfect. This standard applies not only to us but to Himself. Therefore, He loves to an infinite degree, and He has mercy to an infinite degree. We also see that He has wrath to an infinite degree, and it is all maintained in a perfect balance.

Second, we must recognize that God has given government the authority to determine when capital punishment is due ([Genesis 9:6](#); [Romans 13:1-7](#)). It is unbiblical to claim that God opposes the death penalty in all instances. Christians should never rejoice when the death penalty is employed, but at the same time, Christians should not fight against the government’s right to execute the perpetrators of the most evil of crimes.

- Advocate for justice systems that are fair and impartial.
 - Uphold the sanctity of life, seeking both justice for victims and opportunities for redemption.
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5. Ethical and Practical Considerations

a. Questions to Ponder

1. Can human justice systems administer capital punishment fairly, given their imperfections?
2. Does capital punishment deter crime?
3. How should Christians balance justice with forgiveness?

b. Modern Applications

- Many nations debate whether capital punishment is ethical or effective.
 - Christians are called to engage these debates with wisdom, Scripture, and compassion.
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6. Reflection and Discussion

a. Key Scriptures to Reflect On

- *Micah 6:8: "Act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God."*
- *James 2:13: "Mercy triumphs over judgment."*

b. Discussion Questions

1. How does the Bible's teaching on the sanctity of life shape your view of capital punishment?
 2. What role should mercy play in justice systems?
 3. How can we advocate for victims of crime while upholding the gospel's message of redemption?
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Conclusion: God's Justice and Mercy

God's character is a perfect balance of justice and mercy. While the Bible provides principles for capital punishment, it also calls believers to reflect Christ's love and grace in all areas of life. Let us seek His wisdom and walk humbly as we navigate complex issues like this.

Closing Prayer: Lord, help us to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with You. Grant us wisdom to reflect Your character in every decision and interaction. Amen.

Further Study Resources

- *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem (Section on Civil Government).
 - *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis (on Justice and Mercy).
 - Articles on Romans 13 and the Christian's relationship to government.
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After Noah, his family, and the animals exited the ark, God gave a new command: put to death anyone who murders another person. [Genesis 9:6](#) says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image." The severest of penalties is to follow murder, and God Himself gives the reason for it.

God specified that murder was to be punished by death because of the nature of man. Man is created in God's own image ([Genesis 1:27](#)). As murder destroys an image-bearer, it is a direct affront to God Himself. Humans are unique among God's creations—none of the animals are created in God's likeness—and murder is a unique crime.

Another, secondary reason for the mandate is quite practical. The immediate context includes another command given to Noah and his three sons: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" ([Genesis 9:1](#)). Murder, of course, would work against humanity's being fruitful and multiplying. The death penalty for murder thus served as a deterrent to anyone who sought to thwart God's plan to replenish the earth. This was especially important when Noah's family first departed from the ark, at which point only eight people were alive.

Before the Flood, Cain had murdered Abel, and, although Cain was judged by God, he was not put to death ([Genesis 4](#)). Lamech, a descendant of Cain, also murdered someone ([Genesis 4:23-24](#)). By the time of God's judgment in [Genesis 6](#), it appears that crime was rampant, including the crime of murder. After the Flood, a new standard was raised as part of the recreated earth: God would no longer tolerate murder. Later, murder was condemned in the [Ten Commandments](#) ([Exodus 20](#)). The punishment for premeditated murder was death ([Numbers 35:30-34](#)).

In the New Testament, Jesus provided a wider application of the Old Testament command against murder. He taught, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire" ([Matthew 5:21-22](#)). Murder is wrong, and the attitude behind the action is just as wrong. God sees the heart and its intentions ([1 Samuel 16:7](#)).

Murder is consistently listed as a sin throughout the New Testament (e.g., [Revelation 22:15](#)). Man still bears the image of God, and God's view of murder has remained the same.