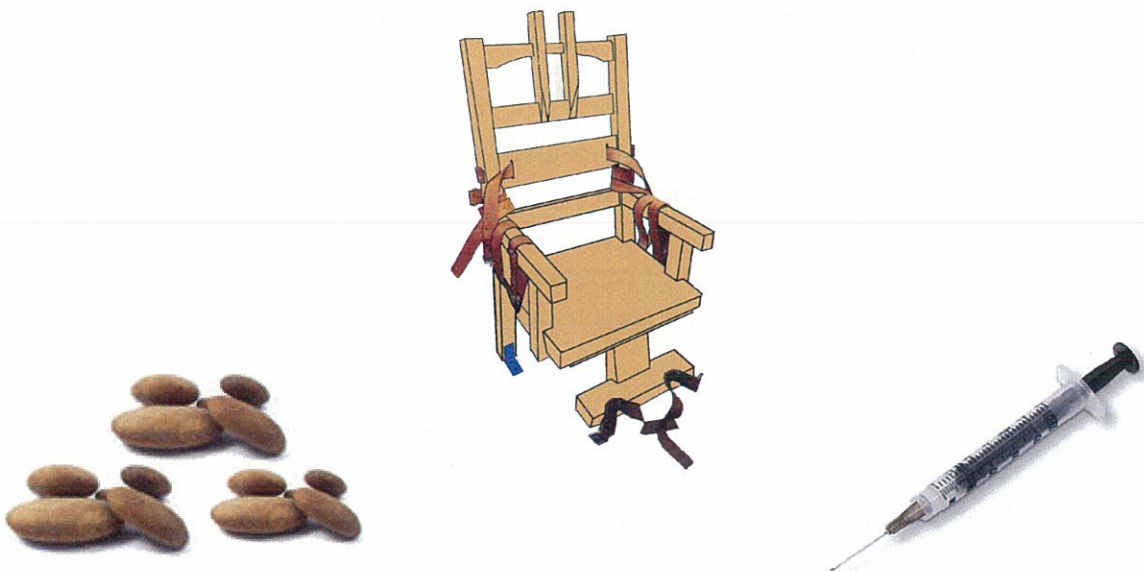


The Pastor's Corner Vol. 26

February, 2011

Does the Bible Support the Death Penalty?



*.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith
that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV*

Does the Bible Support the Death penalty?

Exodus 20:13 (NIV) ***“You shall not murder.”***

Exodus 21:12-14 (NIV) ***“¹²Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. ¹³However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. ¹⁴But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death.”***

Numbers 35:16-19 (NIV) ***“¹⁶If a man strikes someone with an iron object so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. ¹⁷Or if anyone has a stone in his hand that could kill, and he strikes someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. ¹⁸Or if anyone has a wooden object in his hand that could kill, and he hits someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death. ¹⁹The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.”***

Leviticus 20:10 (KJV) ***“And the man that committeth adultery with another man’s wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”***

The issue of capital punishment has for many years divided the saints of God. Capital punishment refers to the execution of a convicted person by the State, following a judicial procedure, as a punishment for a very serious crime committed by the individual. There are many well-meaning saints that are in favor of capital punishment while other well-meaning saints are against it. Both sides express their reasons for their position very well, and both have what they think are valid.

Most of those **in favor** of capital punishment/death penalty use the following arguments:

- The only justice that can be extended to the person murdered is the murderer being put to death.
- The death penalty is better for the murderer since it does not allow the murderer to be killed slowly by life in prison.
- Taxpayers should not be burdened with the bill for keeping convicted criminals alive and in prison for the remainder of their lives.
- The death penalty began with God and is being carried out upon all mankind. Genesis 2:17 (NIV) says, ***“But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”***

- The Bible clearly teaches the death penalty. Nowhere within its pages do we see the death penalty abolished. (See Exodus 21:12-14 and Numbers 35:16-19).
- Although God is loving, we are all still subject to the death penalty. As can be seen by the fact that we are all going to die unless Jesus returns first.
- If God did not reverse the death penalty with Adam, Eve and the rest of humanity, why should we think he changed his mind with convicted murderers?

Most of those **not in favor** of Capital Punishment/Death Penalty use the following arguments:

- Our justice system is flawed and the innocent are sometimes executed.
- Statistically, the death penalty has not worked as a deterrent; the murder rate remains the same.
- The death penalty violates the Eighth Amendment that says, “excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, **nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.**”
- Jesus did away with the death penalty as can be seen with the woman caught in the very act of adultery, a sin punishable by death (see Leviticus 20:10). In John 8:11 (NIV), Jesus said to the woman caught in the act of adultery, “*Go now and leave your life of sin,*” instead of condemning her to death as he would have if he supported the death penalty.
- The Bible says in Exodus 20:13 (KJV), “*Thou shalt not kill*”; therefore we should not have a death penalty.
- How can a merciful nation put another human being to death?

I’m sure there are more arguments from both sides concerning the death penalty, however, the arguments listed are the most common arguments presented by both sides.

For Christians, the final authority on any matter is always God’s word, the Bible. A review of the opening scriptures answers the question, “Does the Bible Support the Death Penalty?” clearly and precisely. One must be either blind, ignorant or just plain dishonest not to realize that the Bible does in fact support the death penalty, no mistake.

But what about all those arguments from those **not in favor** of the death penalty?

Consider the following responses to the arguments of those **not in favor** of the death penalty:

- “Our justice system is flawed and the innocent are sometimes executed.”
This is true and very unfortunate. However, the same justice system allows many guilty people to go free, even in murder and rape cases. No justice system is perfect and unfortunately some innocent people suffer as a result.

However, we must never forget that the perfect example of the innocent being put to death is Jesus. In Matthew 27:19 (NIV) we read, “*While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Don’t have anything to do with that **innocent man**, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.’*” To show that he knew Jesus was innocent and that he wanted nothing to do with crucifying Jesus, Pilate “washed his hands” (Matthew 27:24).

- “Statistically, the death penalty has not worked as a deterrent”
The death penalty is a means designed by God, by which we purge the evil and evildoers from amongst us. Whether or not it serves as a deterrent is irrelevant.
- “The death penalty violates the Eighth Amendment”
Our Constitution and all its amendments have been decided and written by men. These men wrote the Constitution and its amendments without the divine inspiration the men writing the Bible had (2 Timothy 3:16). In Acts 5:29 (NIV) we read, “*Peter and the other Apostles replied: “**We must obey God rather than men.**”* Since the Bible clearly teaches the death penalty, Christians should obey God rather than man and his laws.
- “Jesus did away with the death penalty”
The idea that Jesus did away with the death penalty falls apart when we closely examine John chapter eight. In verse seven, Jesus said (NIV), “*If **any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.**”* It is clear then that Jesus was not abolishing the death penalty if he told his hearers to “**throw a stone at her.**”
- The Bible says “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13, KJV)
The New International Version (NIV) of the Bible translates Exodus 20:13 this way, “***You shall not murder.***” The problem here is that many assume the KJV translation of Exodus 20:13 (Thou shalt not kill) includes the death penalty, but it doesn’t. A better translation of Exodus 20:13 is found in modern translations like the “NIV” which says, “**Thou shall not murder.**”

The difference being the fact that modern translations like the NIV clarify this commandment. The “you shall not murder” refers to the sin of intentionally taking the life of another human being. This sin is committed by anyone taking the life of another human being. Whether it be by gun, knife, abortion, etc., its murder and we are commanded not to murder.

However, God has appointed “governing authorities” to deal with their murderer. In Romans 13:1 (NIV) we read, *“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is not authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”*

In verse 4 (NIV) we read, referring to the governing authorities, *“For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrong doer.”*

- “How could a merciful nation put another human being to death?” The question could be asked in response to this question, “How could a merciful nation put a rapist, a child molester or career criminal in prison for the remainder of his/her life?”

In conclusion, it is clear that the Bible does support the death penalty. The Saints of God that disagree with the death penalty usually do so for one of the following reasons:

- They have been misinformed on the subject.
- They have failed to understand that although God is loving, he will pronounce judgment on the unsaved, condemning them to an eternity of conscious punishment.
- They have allowed their emotions to overrule the plain teaching of the Bible.

Whichever is the case, God’s word says the murderer shall be put to death. It should be noted that all life, from conception belongs to God (Jeremiah 1:5) and none but the governing authorities have been given the authority by God to take life, and that’s only when wrong has been done (murder, etc).

If the Christian Church is to move forward, we must learn God’s word and stand on it completely, whether we agree with it or not. After all, God never asked us for our opinions!

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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