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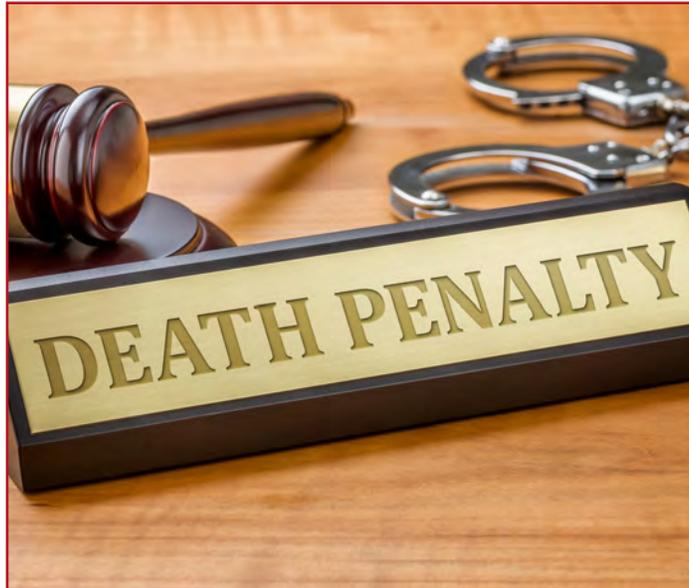
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ABOUT

Capitol Ministries 4



What Does *the* Bible Teach Regarding Capital Punishment?

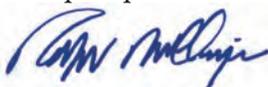


Many people believe the Bible is unclear on the issue of capital punishment — as if you could substantiate either viewpoint, believing one could justify either position. Is such the case?

Fear of the State and its power to execute equal and proportional justice is a necessary force in a fallen world.

In contrast, if one believes that man is basically good, and not fallen, then an overly forceful State seems inhumane. This is the position and conclusion of secular humanism that believes mankind is inherently good, and given enough time and the proper environment, will see the error of his ways and reform; he lacks education.

What follows is a short primer on the Christian worldview of capital punishment.


Ralph Drollinger

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Weekly Bible Studies

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays Mornings. Location Undisclosed. *Light Refreshments Served.*

SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, Rotating Offices of Senators. *Hot Breakfast Served.*

HOUSE: Capitol H324: Monday or Tuesday Evenings after First Votes Back. *Dinner Served.*



■ MINISTRY UPDATE

North America Director

Perry Gauthier



STRENGTHENING EXISTING MINISTRIES TO United States legislatures and creating more like them were primary objectives this year for Perry Gauthier, Capitol Ministries Director for North America.

In collaboration with Ralph Drollinger, Perry made the 20-year Capitol Ministries goal of creating 50 Bible studies in 50 state capitols a priority in 2017.

Perry and Faith, his wife and ministry partner, crisscrossed the nation in a 130-day journey to 30 states where they met with established Ministry Leaders and networked to find others like them for states that do not have discipleship Bible studies.

"In this first ever 30-state ministry tour our goal was to strengthen, pray for, strategize with, encourage, mentor, and shepherd each leader according to their specific Statehouse needs," Perry said.

Ralph and Perry's objective was to solidify the North American ministry and to strengthen the bonds from capital to capital to produce national solidarity and greater effectiveness for Christ.

Before Perry became a pastor, he was an architect and that training is evident in how he sees this effort: "In my mind's eye, I picture steel cables connecting each statehouse for Christ. Our desire was to ratchet down on and tighten each cable. We wanted to increase the tensile strength between each leader through the loving bonds of fellowship, co-ministry, and faith in our common mission field."

Traveling to several states without ministries, Perry and Faith met with church and political leaders to identify Bible teachers to begin Bible studies to leaders in their state capitols.

"And after these trips, I am impressed with the need to make every state capitol

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I. THE OT BASIS OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

THE BIBLE REPEATEDLY PROVIDES the basis and substantiation for capital punishment. It is not as if there are two competing views on this subject in Scripture when one applies normal rules of interpretation to the text of Scripture (known historically as the Grammatical-Historical- Normative science of interpretation). With this in view, notice the plain meaning of the following OT passages.

A. GENESIS 9:6

"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."

B. EXODUS 21:24

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,"

C. LEVITICUS 24:20

"fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him."

D. DEUTERONOMY 19:21

"Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

These passages and others indicate that the Mosaic law was based on the heavenly attribute of equal and proportional justice, and that such is not to be eclipsed by God's attribute of mercy: As we will see, God's compassion in situations of justice is to be supplied by the institution of the Church and members of His body, not by the State. It follows that by way of practical application, the convicted murderer's later appeals for a stay should find no judicial sympathy with the State. When you think about it:

WHEN THE STATE BEGINS TO SHOW MERCY TOWARD CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS AND NOT OTHERS, IT BECOMES UNEQUAL AND PROPORTIONATELY UNJUST IN THE DISPATCH OF ITS GOD-ORDAINED RESPONSIBILITY

Sympathy and mercy are the roles of individuals and of the institution of the Church.

II. THE NT BASIS OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Jesus Himself validates capital punishment in the NT era when He states in Matthew 5:38,

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'"

By quoting this OT truth, known as lex talionis "the law of retaliation," Jesus is saying by the surrounding context of this passage that in no way is lex talionis outdated in its application during this age. Importantly, nowhere in the NT does Jesus reject the OT concept of capital punishment. And, while He instructs us to be merciful in our personal lives, He does not suggest mercy as an alternative for the State. Note this distinction in Romans 12:19 and 13:4. The former is a command by God to the individual and the later is a command by God to the State:

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

for (the State) is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

These NT passages, plus many others, serve to underscore the relevancy of Capital



punishment for today. There is nothing in the NT that negates bringing forward the OT concept of the death penalty.

III. GOD'S REASON FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

When one intentionally puts to death another human being who is made in the image of God, it represents high treason against God Himself because He is the Creator of all human beings. He is the one — and the one and only — who gives life and who can take it away. In response, God has in part designed and given authority to the institution of the State for the purpose of manifesting His justice and retaliation for murder. Understood biblically, the State is His surrogate to achieve this purpose.

IV. THE STATE IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The State has the God-given responsibility to take the life of a murderer, whereas an individual does not. One of the two main purposes of the State being created by God is for the punishment of evildoers. Note 1Peter 2:13-14 in this regard:

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.

God's purpose for the State is to *punish evildoers*. Romans 13:1 in the NT adds,

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Lex talionis remains a just act in the New Testament era in which we live — given the reality of a fallen world where man is corrupt. Genesis 6:11 states in this regard:

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of

God, and the earth was filled with violence.

It stands to reason that to be anti-capital punishment is miscalculated philanthropy, or a misplaced humanitarianism that is unbiblical. Why? Because God is merciful, yes, but He is also just; and His mercy never compromises His justice. Herein then, by man, is a mislaid pity.

Further in support of capital punishment is Proverbs 28:17 which states:

A man who is laden with the guilt of human blood will be a fugitive until death; let no one support him.

The State then, properly understood through the lens of Scripture is God's long arm of justice.

V. THE CHURCH AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The necessity of capital punishment following conviction of a capital crime must not however eclipse the individual's or the church's compassionate visit to the cell of the condemned. The mercy and forgiveness of the Gospel, which affords spiritual birth and life, are a whole other matter that need be presented to those whom the State has rightfully and biblically condemned to physical death.

CAPITAL CONVICTION AND CHURCH COMPASSION REPRESENT A BIBLICAL PARTNERSHIP OF TWO ORDAINED INSTITUTIONS

Their respective roles relative to the convicted should never be compromised. For together, God's justice and mercy are at once on display. That is how God would have it.

VI. SUMMARY

One seemingly difficult question that

Continued from page 2

campus much stronger for Christ's sake," Perry said.

For nine years, Perry has also served as the Ministry Leader to the Nebraska State Legislature where he delivers weekly Bible studies that he writes specifically for leaders. Nebraska has a unicameral system, which is one-house government, and its legislators are called "Senators." Perry's studies are regularly attended by 14 to 18 Senators.

"In my duties as a pastor-teacher, I long for Senators to know God's will as revealed in God's Word so they can apply it in God's world," Perry said. "Their job as governing officials is not easy, but here is some great news: **'All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable . . . that [the Christian legislator] may be equipped for every good work.'**" (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Among Bible study series Perry has written and taught include: *Luke for Legislators*, *The Seven Sins in the Senate*, and *Jehovah's Jurisdiction and Jonah's Journey*.

A common theme is that legislators today are dealing with the same issues that have plagued leaders throughout history. In introducing his series on Queen Esther, Perry said:

"Senators, every issue that presses on your life in this capitol happened long ago within the walls of an ancient palace in Persia. In the Biblical book of Esther, we find greed, promotion, political demotion, beauty, money, sex, power grabs by politicians, race hatred, sex trafficking, immoral legislation, intrigue, betrayal, sleepless nights, and stress off the charts. Welcome to the palace, Senators. I hope to help and guide you as we study for the next 20 weeks the series, *The People and Power of the Palace*."

This year Perry was invited to open the Unicameral Legislative Session in prayer and he asked for God's guidance for the legislators and prayed for the morality of laws.

Seeing the need for God's Word during his mission trips has strengthened Perry's commitment to help plant a CM Bible study ministry in all 50 state capitols.

"I pray that God will bring forth intentional, well-trained disciple-makers who will teach the Word of God in depth to state leaders," he said.

"Reaching legislators and constitutional officers with Scripture is vital because, by God's design, they reside in the nerve centers of culture and they influence much. Most of Paul's missionary journeys were to capital cities." **cm**



What Does the Bible Teach Regarding Capital Punishment?

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sometimes arises relative to this study and should be clarified is this:

If we accept verbatim the OT prescription of the death penalty for murder, while rejecting the equally strongly worded OT prescriptions of the death penalty for adultery, childhood rebelliousness, and bestiality, among other sins (not to mention the OT direction to gouge out an eye or knock out a tooth of one who commits mayhem), how do we escape the criticism that we are just picking and choosing our crimes?

Those specific punishments for crimes are not repeated in the dispensation of the New Covenant that God makes in the New Testament with His Church. That is why it is so important in this study to have included Jesus' words regarding capital punishment (point III). Those other forms of punishment were intended by God to set apart Israel as a holy and righteous priestly nation. Such is not the case today as God grafted in the Church as His primary representative people in the world today. Those penalties are not prescribed in the NT, whereas capital punishment is.

May God grant you His instruction and convictions regarding the necessity of capital punishment in a fallen world — as is the case today in America. Studies indicate that when capital punishment is not practiced by the state, that murder increases due to a lack of fear of equal and proportional retribution. Therefore, as a lawmaker it is incumbent on you to stand for the death penalty relative to the good of the citizens of the country. **cm**

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Romans 12:19; Romans 13:4

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

for [the State] is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.



The former is a command by God to the individual and the later is a command by God to the State.

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