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# What about Capital Punishment

## Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

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**W**HAT a price we are paying for crime! We are making payments in money to feed, clothe, educate and, yes, rehabilitate the criminals. We all are assuming responsibility to repair and replace damaged and stolen merchandise. We share in suffering, agony and pain of our friends and relatives who are victims. Occasionally, we personally become victims. Our insurance bills reflect the cost of crime. Are we asking the reason for such condition? It is not as complicated as the fuzzy-headed education~1 and judicial leaders would have us believe.

The responsibility for today's crime wave may be divided into many facets, but the religionist cannot be bypassed. Most large religious bodies have presented resolutions favoring the abolishment of capital punishment. Both Protestant clergyman and Catholic priests speak out against it. Chanting demonstrators outside call capital punishment "murder."

Only God knows the price we are paying for the neglect of basic doctrines of the Bible. This trend to abolish capital punishment is the consequence of our religious leaders losing their grip on the great fundamental doctrines of God's Word, such as the justice and judgment of God, His hatred for sin, and the great doctrine of hell. No longer do we hear sermons on such grave consequences. The lies of the liberal theologians are finally getting through to many leaders. Their message has been, "God is such a good God. Such a loving God would not punish anybody in hell." These religious leaders have taken the sword of justice out of the hands of the Sovereign, sin-avenging God. Today's average pulpit has humanized God, deified man and winked at sin with all of its ugly consequences. Man has forgotten or ignored the justice of God that demands judgment. Of course the motivation for such action is to do away with personal guilt.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest, the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (II Corinthians 4:3, 4). "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be proved" (John 3:19, 20).

God has entrusted in the heads of our governmental rulers the power to execute wrath upon evildoers. Take the sword of justice out of the hands of our rulers and you have destroyed the foundation of God's government over the world. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may

put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (I Peter 2:13-15). "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain (here is capital punishment): for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Romans 13:1-4).

The Old Testament is filled with the death sentence for certain actions by people. What happened to any individual touching Mt. Sinai? (Exodus 19:12, 13; note also Leviticus 20:2, 27) "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 24:17). "And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he aim with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death. The revenger of blood himself shall slay the murderer: when he meeteth him, he shall slay him. Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death" (Numbers 35:16-19, 30, 31).

God never intended for lawlessness to reign upon this earth. Society has to be purged, if not cleansed by God's Grace. Just because this is the age of Grace, the Law of God is still to be obeyed. We Christians obey it in the energizing power of the Holy Spirit. Everything we are unable to do, Christ does for us. We can do everything God commands (Philippians 4:13). The Bible plainly teaches that the Christian will not commit murder. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15). Since when under Grace has God changed his attitude towards sinners who commit murder? If society is not purged of its evildoers, it will rot, and the consequence will become evident to all. Turn the rapist and murderer loose on society and see what happens. Quite a few judges have learned as well as the victims of the repeated crimes.

The Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). Where in the Bible does it say, Thou shalt not kill the killer? The part of the religious world that classifies capital punishment as barbaric, possesses warped and twisted minds of sin, judgment and damnation of hell. They do not know a God of wrath as clearly revealed in the Bible. All unrepentant murderers go to hell (Galatians 5:21; John 3:36).

Many people get confused about Law and Grace. In Grace, the Law is not destroyed or done away with – it is fulfilled. The moral Law of God which reveals His absolutely authority and our course of action is not destroyed. If you think the New Testament is easier on sin, be sure to read Matthew 5:21,

22, 27, 28. The penalty of death for murders was inflicted long before the Law was given to Moses. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man, at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:5, 6).

Satan's seduction of Eve in the Garden of Eden dealt with death. "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye DIE. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely DIE" (Genesis 3:3, 4).

Ever since this first conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan, man has been listening to the wrong voice if he questions God's call for death to the murderer. It was in the beautiful, perfect Garden of Eden that the opposition of judgment for wrong doing got its start by the father of all liars, Satan. The Law of God was there (Thou shalt and thou shalt not.) Before we come to Christ and receive God's marvelous provisions, we must face the judgment of God and His condemnation of our sins. No sinner will find mercy in Christ until he first assumes responsibility for going to hell as the automatic consequence of his own sin in the sight of a holy God.

We are guilty and condemned and revealed as such by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. "And when He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). Our sin is against God and all acknowledgment must be made before Him. After repentance, we trust in Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). When a murderer tells on himself to a God of Mercy and Grace and trusts in His promises for Divine intervention in his eternal behalf, he is then classified as no longer being a sinner but a holy person, a saint. What a difference in his conduct and lifestyle. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Friend, we better never hold the Law of God in contempt. He is a sin-avenging God whether we believe Him or not. If one person gets by with sin, God must step off the throne in heaven. Be assured no one escapes His judgment. Our country is paying a dear price for neglecting His plain direction for dealing with crime. Adequate punishment is the greatest deterrent to crime. We get soft and mushy toward wrong doing only to our shame and calamity. When failing to obey God, we are spending as much money on the criminals in our prisons as on the sons and daughters we are putting through college. What a price we pay for failing to believe and obey God.

God changes men from sinners into saints. He places His spirit within the hearts of transformed people, that enables them to do His will. He declares them justified in His heavenly record and adopts them into His family. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes into a life, what a difference in conduct! "But as many as received him (THE LORD JESUS CHRIST) to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12).

Does the gospel work within the hearts and lives of criminals? Of course it does? My years of experience in the Dade County jail have demonstrated it many times over in the lives of men who dare to become honest about their sin and trust in the provision of God to rid them of it. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word in not in us" (I John 1:10).

No one is capable of delivering himself from the pollution and consequence of sin. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

Christ came to rescue sinners from the judgment of sin which produces damnation. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Timothy 1:15). "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10.)

Only God gives repentance, which is a change of mind and spirit toward God and sin. *He requires it.* "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

The Lord Jesus Christ alone has power to save, forgive and cleanse from sin. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We trust Christ to do for us that which we are incapable of doing. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Will you this moment consider yourself to be a sinner for whom Christ died? Will you repent of your sin, naming them to God and believe His promises to save you? And whether you be a criminal in jail or out of jail, God will forgive your crimes against Him. This is His promise in the Word!

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