

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND LESSONS FOR US

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TEXT:

“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Genesis 9:6).

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

Purpose: To make us see the need of taking the word of God seriously.

Introduction:

1) Imagine, someone in a city taken out of the city and stoned to death, you are a witness.

2) The subject of capital punishment is a “hot” topic in the world.

(1) Many opposed: say it is “murder”.

(2) “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: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Romans 13:4).

(3) “For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar” (Acts 25:11).

3) God, under certain circumstances in the Old Testament required the offender be put to death.

4) Today, we are not under the Old Testament law, yet want to note some of the reasons for capital punishment (commanded of God!), with some lessons for us.

5) If God commanded the death penalty for certain sins in olden times, do we think he will excuse ours on the judgement day?

I. MURDER

1) “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Genesis 9:6).

2) “He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death” (Exodus 21:12).

3) "But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee" (Deuteronomy 19:11-13).

4) We ought to respect life from conception to grave.

(1) Yet Abortion - "And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD" (Genesis 25:22).

(2) Infanticide, mercy killing- "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border:" (Amos 1:13).

5) If a man's ox was known to push, owner was to be warned, then if it was not kept in and killed someone, owner would be put to death. "If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death" (Exodus 21:28-29).

II. KIDNAPING (MEN - STEALERS)

1) "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:16).

2) "If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you" (Deuteronomy 24:7).

3) Today: "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;" (1Timothy 1:9-10); (respects others' rights).

III. SMITING OR CURSING A PARENT

1) "And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:15-17).

2) "For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him" (Leviticus 20:9).

3) "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear" (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

4) Today: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

5) Do we think on judgement day, the Lord overlook this sin?

IV. PROFANING THE SABBATH

1) God ordained the sabbath for the Jew.

(1) "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

(2) Given to them because God gave them rest from Egyptian bondage . "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15).

(3) If one violated the sabbath, put to death.

(4) "Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Exodus 31:14).

2) Today, the first day of the week is the Lord's day (not the sabbath).

(1) "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

(2) "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1Corinthians 10:11).

(3) "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1Corinthians 16:1-2).

3) Can we neglect (abuse) God's divine appointments and expect God to simply overlook it? "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;" (Hebrews 9:25).

V. SINS OF A SEXUAL NATURE

1) **Adultery:** "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man lie with his daughter in law, both of them shall surely be put to death: they have wrought confusion; their blood shall be upon them. If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. And if a man take a wife and her mother, it is wickedness: they shall be burnt with fire, both he and they; that there be no wickedness among you" (Leviticus 20:10-14).

2) **Rape:** "But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die:" (Deuteronomy 22:25).

3) **Sodomy (homosexuality):** "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Leviticus 20:13).

4) **Bestiality:** "And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast. And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Leviticus 20:15-16).

5) Application: can we escape judgement if guilty? No

III. SINS OF A RELIGIOUS NATURE

1) **Idolatry.**

(1) "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that

sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people” (Leviticus 20:1-5).

(2) “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:” (Colossians 3:5).

2) **Sorcery.**

(1) “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (Exodus 22:18).

(2) “But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me” (Acts 8:9-24).

3) **Blasphemy:** “And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16).

4) **False prophet:**

(1) “But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I

have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20).

(2) “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Romans 16:17).

(3) “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

CONCLUSION:

1) These examples prove to us the seriousness of obeying God. Taking God seriously!

2) As severe as this was, Hebrews’ writer says will be worse on us.

(1) “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:28-29).

(2) “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;” (Hebrews 2:1-3).

3) Have you set aside God’s word? Have you been serious in serving God?