

WHY I BELIEVE IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Text: Numbers 35:15-18, 29-33

INTRO: Our subject is one which, in modern America, is very controversial. It is a subject on which almost everyone has a strong opinion. It is a subject that stirs emotions & thus hampers our logic & sense of reason unless we are very careful to keep our emotional involvement in its proper perspective.

With this introduction, I want to share with you the primary reasons why I believe in capital punishment for the crime of pre-meditated murder.

I. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IS THE NATURAL RESPONSE TO CAPITAL CRIMES.

A. The Bible teaches that there are some things we know or learn by nature, 1 Cor 11:14.

When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, altho not having the law, are a law to themselves. (Rom 2:14)

B. When a person has willfully, intentionally taken the life of an innocent victim, the murderer expects to be hunted down & destroyed. Tho he hopes to use the system of law to avoid the death he deserves, he knows that the natural response to his crime is sure & certain death.

[Cain:] Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the earth; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive & a vagabond on the earth, & it will happen that anyone who finds me will kill me.
(Gen 4:14)

C. Virtually every society, regardless of its religious background has at one time or another used the death penalty for such crimes as murder, thus underscoring that it is the natural response to such crimes.

D. It shall be noted, however, that this is definitely NOT the primary reason for us to believe in capital punishment.

II. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IS A DETERRENT TO CAPITAL CRIMES.

- A. Many psychologists insist that the death penalty is not a deterrent to murder. A great number of lawmakers and high level politicians have been influenced by their thinking. Watergate conspirator Chas Colson (supposedly a “born again Christian”) argues: “Finally I do not think that cap pun is any deterrent. I visited a man on death row in Idaho. He had committed several murders while under the influence of narcotics. He was out of his mind, & so the thot of death was no deterrent. By definition it never is a deterrent in a crime of passion. And recently in Idaho a ‘hit’ man was sentenced to die by hanging. He had taken \$5000 to kill a man’s wife. He knew the consequences but the price was right.”
- B. What Colson has neglected to consider is that some may have been deterred from submitting themselves to the influence of drugs or from becoming hit men by a recognition of the penalty that might result from such crime. Some may have even been able to hold their passion in check with the realization that otherwise, they might forfeit their own lives.
- C. We grant that as practiced in our country, cap pun is little deterrent to murder. The failure, however is not in the form of punishment, but in our failure to use it properly

READ DEUTERONOMY 19:18-21

NOTE: God says society will hear & fear. Colson says they will not. I BELIEVE GOD. But society will not hear & fear unless what they hear is consistent.

III. THE PRIMARY REASON I BELIEVE IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT IS BECAUSE GOD HAS COMMANDED IT.

- A. God first gave specific instructions for capital punishment in the days of Noah, long before He ever gave man a written law, Gen 9:6.

- B. When God gave a written law to His chosen people He underscored & emphasized the importance of keeping capital crimes under control by use of the death penalty. TEXT.
- C. These commands were based on eternal principles & the coming of the N.T. system did nothing to alter those principles.
 - 1. Jesus honored the validity of the death penalty: “All who take the sword will perish by the sword.” (MT 26:52).
 - 2. Paul recognized the legitimacy of the death penalty for crimes worthy of death. “If I have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying...” (Acts 25:11).
 - 3. The penitent robber crucified with Jesus recognized that he & his companion in crime deserved to be punished by death, Luke 23:41.
 - 4. The apostle of love has written, “...He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Rev. 13:10).
 - 5. PLEASE NOTE: It is GOD who has the supreme right to take vengeance on evil doers--& He has given that responsibility to those who rule in human governments. They are His agents. READ ROMANS 12:19 thru 13:7.

IV. FAILURE TO USE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AS GOD HAS ORDAINED WILL EVENTUALLY BRING JUDICIAL DEATH TO OUR NATION AS IT HAS TO OTHERS BEFORE US.

- A. Ancient Israel. READ NUMBERS 35:33-34
- B. The same principle applied to Egypt, Babylon, Edom, & all other nations.

Egypt shall be a desolation & Edom a desolate wilderness because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land.
(Joel 3:19)

V. A REVIEW OF THE MAJOR OBJECTIONS OFFERED AGAINST CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

A. Some say it is not in keeping with the spirit of the N.T. re turning the other cheek, etc. We must note the difference between an individual personal response to a crime, & the civil, judicial response to that crime.

B. What about the possibility that innocent people may be convicted & executed? This is a legitimate & grave concern.

1. We should take all reasonable precautions to prevent such miscarriage of justice.

2. We must also remember that failure to follow God's instructions may cause untold innocent persons to be murdered by criminals who should have already been executed.

Example: Clyde Barrow. Committed his first murder while in prison for burglary. Was paroled about a year later by Texas Gov. Ross Sterling. He went on to murder at least 12 more innocent victims in the next 3 years until he himself was gunned down by Texas Rangers.

C. Why not life imprisonment?

1. Not fair to tax payers.

2. Usually eligible for parole within 7 & 1/2 years.

3. May escape & murder again.

4. May, while in prison, murder someone who is there for a lessor crime.

5. It isn't what God commanded to cleanse the land from the innocent blood which has been shed.

D. Some say cap pun is not a deterrent to murder. It would be if it were used consistently. And it would certainly prevent repeat offenders.

E. Some say cap pun is “playing God.” Not so. It is NOT playing God, it is OBEYING God.

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