

Lesson Notes:

Capital Punishment, Can't We Compromise

What does the Bible say about capital punishment? The Old Testament not only permitted it but the law required it for many different reasons. Jesus changed that when he no longer required us to live under the requirements of Mosaic Law. There is a number of passages dealing with love, forgiveness and turning the other cheek. But Romans 13:4 says that government does not bare the sword in vain. Depending upon how this verse is meant to be interpreted it could condone or condemn capital punishment:

Scriptural Principles

- 1) **The Old Testament listed over 15 reasons a person could be put to death – They included Adultery, Incest, Rape, Murder, False Prophecy, Sorcery, and even working on the Sabbath.** – In **Exodus 21:12-14** murder was punishable by death. Therefore, in the Old Testament capital punishment was common and in some cases the punishment by today's standards would not fit the crime. This was to demonstrate the seriousness of sin.
- 2) **Jesus was called not to abolish the law but to fulfill the law.** – In **Matthew 5:17-20** Jesus tells us that he is here to fulfill the law. So that our sins can be placed upon him. Therefore, the sins of a murderer can be placed upon Jesus.
- 3) **Love is the principle to guide our actions.** – In **Matthew 5:43-48** and **Matthew 22:34-40** Jesus tells us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Paul tells us in **Romans 13:9-10** and in **Galatians 5:14-15** that we are to do no harm to our neighbor.
- 4) **We are no longer bound by Old Testament Law** – In **John 1:16-17** John tells us that Jesus has brought us grace and truth. Paul tells us in **Romans 8:1-3** and in **1 Corinthians 9:20-21** that we are no longer bound by the law.
- 5) **Jesus rejects taking revenge** – In **Matthew 5:38-41** and **Matthew 7:1-5** Jesus teaches that we are to resist taking revenge but to turn the other cheek.
- 6) **Peter and Paul warned about revenge** – In **Romans 12:17-21** Paul warns us not to take revenge and in **1 Peter 3:9** Peter provides us with the same advice.
- 7) **We are to submit to Government** – However in **Romans 13:1-3** Paul tells us that we are submit to the laws of government.
- 8) **But government does not bare the sword in vain** – In **Romans 13:4** Paul tells us that government does not bare the sword in vain. Some interpret this passage to allow capital punishment. Others interpret this passage as a figurative reference to the power to maintain an orderly society.