

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*Studies on*

# **MORAL ISSUES**

## **#1 - Decisions About Death**

- 1 -- The Need for a Moral Standard
- 2 -- Euthanasia
- 3 -- Abortion (Infanticide)
- 4 -- Suicide
- 5 -- Capital Punishment
- 6 -- The Importance of Moral Training

*Prepared by:*  
*Paul E. Cantrell*  
*84 Northview Drive*  
*Mechanicsburg, PA 17050*

[pecantrell@juno.com](mailto:pecantrell@juno.com)

2009



Lesson One

**"The Need for a Moral Standard"**

Moral misbehavior has hit this country like a tidal wave! It is becoming more obvious in all realms of our lives. Our society is more and more advocating that there is no universal right or wrong! It is seen when:

- a) Financial profit, not moral principles, determines our choice.
- b) When pleasure, entertainment, drunkenness, and excess are called "gracious living."
- c) When cheating and deception is the smart thing to do.
- d) When moral guidelines are ignored or repudiated.

When these things begin to undermine our Laws, our Homes, and our Religious Beliefs—this country will fall!

What is the answer to all of this? What course should a Christian pursue? Do we need a new Moral Standard that offers new freedoms and less restraint? Can true or greater happiness be found this way?

**Possible Reasons for These Conditions**

1. **Basic breakdown in the home.** Read & Discuss the following Bible references:

- Mal. 2:16 \_\_\_\_\_
- Eph. 6:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_
- Prov. 13:24 \_\_\_\_\_
- Prov. 20:20 \_\_\_\_\_
- Prov. 22:15 \_\_\_\_\_
- Prov. 29:15 \_\_\_\_\_

If the home will not give guidance to their children...then, society has to!

2. **Educated men telling us that we are not responsible for our anti-social behavior!**

- Gal. 6:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Advocation of Increased Freedom.** People want more freedom to do as they please...be happier!

- 1 Jn. 2:15 \_\_\_\_\_
- Heb. 11:25 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Pet. 2:19 \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Unwillingness to Accept God's Standard for Morality!** Each man wants to be his own Law-giver, his own "god," to go his own way!

Judges 17:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Jas. 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Jas. 4:11-12 \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons for Moral Laws**

1. **Man was created by God to know and to act moral!** This is the uniqueness of man—(1) His ability to make moral decisions; and (2) His willingness to live by those decisions. Man's highest nobility and dignity is realized here!

Rom. 1:32 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 2:12-15 \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Man lives with others!** And because we do so, our actions must be controlled for the good of all; otherwise, the fabric of an ordered society will fall apart.

Matt. 7:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 22:39 \_\_\_\_\_

Civilization depends for its very existence upon the acceptance of a decent code of conduct by its populace. It must be known and widely accepted or chaos occurs—jungle conditions will be the results.

3. **The Need is Obvious!** Wicked, lawless, vicious men do not make for the most compatible society.

Phil. 2:14-16 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Pet. 3:13 \_\_\_\_\_

A better place is promised to the righteous, not the Lawless! Of what value would it be to look for new heavens and earth when this one is great? Without decent moral laws Policemen become a joke! In the first place, there would be no justifiable laws to uphold; and in the second place, no Police Force is large enough to control the masses. Fortunately, enough people in society realize this

truth that helps to contain itself. Where there is no standard of Morality, everyone does whatever they desire that is right in their own eyes!

**What is Moral Law?**

**1. It is the ability to recognize the rightness or wrongness of human actions.**

**Isa. 5:20-24** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We identify our actions as "wise" or "unwise;" "courteous" or "discourteous;" "graceful" or "awkward." And....**everyone** has a concept of "right" and "wrong." Without this understanding, there can be no justified threat of punishment.

History shows clearly that man, without a revelation from God, is capable of establishing moral law.

**Rom. 2:12-15** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Man is made a rational, reasoning, being with moral understanding. However, man's consciousness of right and wrong can be so corrupted that he can become quite evil or wicked.

**1 Tim. 4:2** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gen. 6:5-7** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

It is because of this that God has given us a perfect Law so that all things can be judged by it.

**2 Tim. 3:16-17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. It is the ability to recognize that all human actions have consequences!**

**Rom. 6:23** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gal. 6:7-8** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Eccl. 8:11** \_\_\_\_\_

Reaping will come sooner or later. It comes not only upon the person who acts, but also upon others who may be innocent of wrong-doing. When the consequences are delayed, men tend to surmise....*"I can do as I please without consequences!"*

**What Determines the Rightness or Wrongness  
of our Deeds?**

**1. That which is behind the deed—the thoughts or intents of the heart.** Such intents are either worthy of praise or blame. This can be seen in the life of David. He planned and intended to build a Temple for God to dwell in, but God would not allow him to do so. Yet, his good intentions were rewarded by God.

**1 Jn. 3:15** \_\_\_\_\_

Two men gave money to another man. One man gave it with the desire to have someone murdered. The second man gave it with the desire to help a poor widow. The intent of the heart is critical!

**Prov. 4:23** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matt.15:19-20** \_\_\_\_\_

Unintentional pain to others by accident is much easier to excuse; but not purposeful hurting. We also make distinctions between "accidental" death and "pre-meditated" death. But.....the reverse of this can also be true!

**Matt. 15:8** \_\_\_\_\_

A man is baptized to get \$1,000.00. Another man did so in order to receive "the remission of sins." (Acts 2:38). Were both of the men right and obedient to God? It would seem that no man is innocent whose heart is not kept clean.

**Jas. 4:8** \_\_\_\_\_

**Concluding Thoughts**

In every heart of man there is a sense of "ought" and "ought not!" Our problem comes when something is wrong, but we desire that thing. The outcome of this decision determines our **MORAL CHARACTER!**

God has given us His Law to help us know clearly what is right or wrong; and, in addition, strives to motivate us to make the right choice in our lives.

*What kind of moral character do we have?*

## Lesson Two

**"Euthanasia"**

Is it ever right to take a life when that life has no hope of lasting for very long? What about keeping people alive with machines; should it be done? Will "mercy-killing" become acceptable legally, as abortion has? Do these two things logically go together?

"Euthanasia" is a Greek word that simply means "good death." A general definition of the term, as used in our society, would be: *"To deliberately bring about the painless death of a person who is suffering from an incurable disease or condition so that they will not have to endure suffering."* This can be done in at least two ways:

1. By administering a lethal drug to kill the pain and quickly bring on cessation of the life of the person;
2. By refusing the use of artificial means that may prolong their life for a period of time and allow them to eventually die a natural death.

In both instances, the intent is that of showing mercy to the person that is suffering or allowing the person to die naturally. There has been two terms used to identify these two approaches: **"Passive Euthanasia,"** and **"Active Euthanasia."** How do you feel about the following quotation?

*"It must be made abundantly clear that the humane practice of medicine has always allowed the physician and patient (or his family) to decide what measures, if any, should be employed to prolong the patient's life. There is absolutely no need for legislation to protect either the physician or the patient in this regard."*

Where most of the discussion occurs over this issue is what is termed **"Active Euthanasia."** This involves taking purposeful action to **END** a person's life. However, the primary intent of "active euthanasia" is:

1. To make an evaluation by the doctor, patient, and/or family;
2. To determine that the patient is terminally ill and has no hope;
3. To decide by one or all three to take his/her life artificially in order to make an inevitable death easier.

The reasons behind such an approach is:

1. It benefits all.....because the person does not have to linger in suffering and agony.
2. The agony the family is put through deserves to be understood and helped.

**Matt. 5:7** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hos. 6:6** \_\_\_\_\_

How would the following Scripture help in trying to decide about this issue of "active euthanasia?"

Matt.23:23 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In your estimation, what is the single biggest objection to "active euthanasia?" \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How does the following passage help with a better understanding of this issue?

Rom.13:8-10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Objections to Active Euthanasia**

1. It cheapens the value of human life by taking it before its time to die.
2. Any mistake in judgment about their life is always fatal....non-reversible.
3. It grants to committees and bureaucrats (whose intentions cannot always be trusted) with the power of life and death over people.
4. It violates the letter and spirit of our constitution which guarantees life to all.
5. It would place a great temptation upon families, physicians, and society to make selfish decision concerning who should be put to death.
6. It would be interpreted to say: *"Those who do not contribute economically to society are considered a burdensome problem to be removed."*

Do you have additional objections to active euthanasia? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Does the Bible Offer us Help with This Decision?**

There is an incident recording in the Old Testament that might give some insight—King Saul of Israel. (2 Sam. 1:1-16). Saul had been told by God that he and his sons would die in battle that day. In the battle Saul was mortally injured, but not dead. He pleaded with his armor-bearer to help him die in order to prevent either a slow death or torture and humiliation at the hands of the

victorious Philistines. The aide refused. Saul tried to kill himself, but failed. A by-stander, an Amalekite, was seen by Saul and pleaded with him to kill him: *"stand beside me and slay me; for anguish has seized me, and yet my life still lingers. So I stood beside him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen."*

### **Thoughts About the Above**

This is a classic description of the reasons for Active Euthanasia—*"So I stood beside him, and slew him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen."* In other words, put him out of his misery—end it quickly because death was sure.

Some things we need to realize about the above:

1. Saul had long turned his heart away from serving God and did not seem to value human life as he should have.
  - a) He slew innocent people;
  - b) He had tried to slay David out of jealousy and envy;
  - c) He did not hesitate to try to commit suicide;
  - d) This shows the wrong view about taking innocent life.
2. The Amalekite had no scruples about taking life either.
3. But notice David's reaction:
  - a) He had the Amalekite killed;
  - b) He did not consider the man's explanation acceptable;
  - c) There are no indications in Scripture anywhere that David did wrong or had the wrong view.
4. God makes no allowance in either Old or New Testaments for mercy-killing.
5. The Bible does present two important alternatives:
  - a) The possibility of healing! (Jas. 5:13-15)
    - ◇ There was some miraculous healing in the early church.
    - ◇ Healing is always an alternative to impending death.
    - ◇ Some have had amazing recovery from what was thought sure death.
  - b) To realize that God has purpose in suffering! (2 Cor. 12:7-9)
    - ◇ Paul's response (2 Cor. 12:9-10).
    - ◇ 1 Pet. 4:12-17; Heb. 2:18; Jas. 5:10-11, etc.
6. The basic reason against such is that it is viewed as murder—taking an innocent life.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

#### **Challenging Thoughts about participating in Active Euthanasia:**

- 1) The Bible warns against taking a life. To take an innocent life is called "murder."
- 2) The absence of any statement to indicate that such actions are acceptable.
- 3) The example of David's actions regarding the death of King Saul.
- 4) We realize that God loves man and is merciful, but He has given no indication of the acceptability of taking a human life that is innocent.
- 5) The great fear where such "so-called" merciful actions might lead to.

Job seems to give the proper recognition of God's place in all of this:

- 1) His wife saw his extremely pitiable condition.
- 2) Her thoughts: ***"Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die."***
- 3) Job's reply: ***"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."*** (2:9-10).

Even in our technological age, we don't know all the answers. Would it not be better to leave it in the hands of God?

*Lesson Three*

**"Abortion"**

The question of "Abortion" is not an easy one to answer with "plain and exact" statements of Scripture. The emotional issues often overwhelm any facts that are presented about the question of the rightness or wrongness of such. It takes effort to find a factual or logical answer to this question about abortion—and few are willing to spend the time necessary.

The following questions are involved in this issue:

- a) Is abortion murder or disposing of a glob of flesh?
- b) When does life start for a human being?
- c) When is the soul or spirit placed within the fetus by God?
- d) Does life come:
  - ◇ At the moment of conception;
  - ◇ Or when movement is felt by the mother;
  - ◇ Or when the fetus can survive outside of the womb;
  - ◇ Or at birth;
  - ◇ Or sometime after birth?
- e) If "death" is the separation of the body and spirit (Jas. 1:26); then, is "life" when the spirit comes into the body (Gen. 2:7)?
- f) Do Christians have the right to impose their views upon others, or is this a basic moral question that involves all mankind?
- g) Should a child be brought into the world where there is little chance of happiness?
- h) Do we have the right to force a raped woman to bear the unwanted child of her molester?

We hope that this lesson can provide a guide to find some answers to the above questions!

**Past Efforts with regards to Abortion**

In 1962, efforts were made to revise abortion laws. A decision was made to legalize abortion only under the following conditions:

- a) Where the mother's physical or mental health was involved;
- b) Where rape or incest was involved.

Later, various states began making differing laws regarding such.

In 1973, the Supreme Court in this country was called in to make a decision about the matter. They abolished all abortion laws in the States. They ruled that the decision regarding abortion, prior to the last 10 weeks, must be made solely by the woman and her doctor. They carefully avoided dealing with the question of when does human life begin! Their attitude was:

*"We need not resolve the difficult question of when an unborn child actually becomes a human person, with a legal right to live. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer."*

"Abortion on demand" has become the legally accepted thing with millions of abortions performed since 1973.

### **Why do women want abortions?**

Following are some of the basic reasons given:

- 1) Where there may be physical or mental danger to the mother.
- 2) Where the child might be physically or mentally defective.
- 3) Rape or incest.

It is advocated that most of the millions of abortions since 1973 have been for "medical purposes;" but the facts have not born this out at all. Only a small percentage is for "medical reasons." The vast majority are for social reasons or personal preference. Large percentages are performed upon "unmarried" teenagers! It seems that people want to enjoy the pleasures of sin, but they do not want to pay the penalty!

A professor at the U.C.L.A. medical school gave some information about a family and then asked his students a question.

*"Here is the family history—the father has syphilis; the mother has tuberculosis. They already have four children. The first is blind; the second has died; the third is deaf; and the fourth has tuberculosis. The mother is pregnant. The parents are willing to have an abortion if you decided they should. What do you think?"*

Most of the students decided on abortion. The professor then stated:

*"Congratulations, you have just murdered Beethoven!"*

### **Undesirable effects of Abortion**

Are there any dangers or undesirable effects of abortion to the woman? The following things have been indicated by those who have made a study of such:

**Medically**—There is a danger of infection. One of the main reasons for passing some laws in 1962 was to protect women from "butchers!" But even when performed under ideal circumstances, there is still no guarantee. There can be damage to tissue, injury to vital organs, or even infertility.

**Emotionally**—The mental anguish and guilt feelings can be a torture chamber. The problems may be delayed, but eventually they will come out. The question that the mother continually faces is: "Did I kill my baby?" And obviously, there is no way the deed can be undone!

**Spiritually**—If it is wrong to have an abortion and the person goes unrepentant of the wrong-doing, can they have an assurance of going to heaven when they die? One's relationship with God can be destroyed or it could hinder one from becoming a Christian because of the problem.

How do you view the following quotation?

*"It would seem at first glance to some people that to kill off your problems eliminates the problems. In the long run, however, the philosophy of disrespect for human life that this entails erodes the very foundation stone of a stable society, and ultimately will cause far greater chaos and human misery than the somewhat easy solution it may present to some on the surface."*

**Is abortion murder?**

Christianity came into a world that did not value human life very highly. There were millions of slaves treated like property to be sold and used. Torture and atrocities were performed for public entertainment in the arena. Killing of unwanted babies was a common practice. The teachings of Christ brought a new outlook about life. It is sacred! The three parables in Luke 15 showed the great concern of God for lost souls.

**Matt. 19:14** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Acts 10:34** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Matt. 5:21-22** \_\_\_\_\_

To many, the act of abortion is a return to pagan ways of thinking. It is obvious that both the Old and New Testaments speak against taking innocent life!

**Exo. 20:13** \_\_\_\_\_

The real issue that must be carefully thought through is the question of when does "life" start. If there is no life before birth, then abortion would not necessarily be murder! But if there is life before birth, then abortion could be considered murder. Do the Scriptures help us with an answer to this important question?

Unfortunately, there are no clear statements concerning abortion. Any help has to come from insights from passages or principles upon which to base our decisions.

**Ps. 139:13-16** \_\_\_\_\_

**Jeremiah 1:4-5** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 1:15** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 1:41** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 2:16** \_\_\_\_\_

**Jas. 2:26** \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions:**

1. Does the spirit come into a fetus at conception or is the fetus "dead?"
2. Is the same Greek word used of the fetus in Elizabeth's womb as is used of children already born? (Brephas) (**Lk. 1:41; 1 Pet. 2: 1-2**)
3. Is there any indication from Scripture that the spirit is placed in the fetus before birth or after birth?
4. Does the mother's "right over her body" supercede the "right of a child to be born?"
5. At what point can we say that a potential human has the right to life?

**Concluding Thoughts**

If a person is doubtful about this whole issue, would it not be best to not abort a "fetus?" It is advocated that a woman has a right over her own body and doctors have the right to advise her about her body. But do either of these have the right to terminate the life process?

God's people certainly should show a high regard for life and the life processes!

*Lesson Four*

**"Suicide"**

The term "suicide" simply means to kill one's self! It is the planned effort to end one's life by some efforts of self. It has become an increasing way for both teens and the elderly to end their earthly existence. Generally speaking, accidental death is not considered under this heading. The following Scriptures are examples of suicide:

- 1 Sam. 31:4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Sam. 31:5 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Sam. 17:23 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Kgs. 16:18 \_\_\_\_\_
- Judges 16:29-30 \_\_\_\_\_
- Matt. 27:5 \_\_\_\_\_

**Why do people kill themselves?**

**1. The poor evaluation of human life.** The further man gets away from God, the lesser value he places on human life. The belief that man has evolved from the lower forms of life doesn't help in this matter either.

Gen. 1:26-27 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. The break-up of the home has taken its toll.** When the basic make-up of the family is destroyed, people have a hard time believing that life is worth-while. The feeling of loneliness, unloved, and not wanted plays a big role in suicide.

Matt.19:4-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. The decline in holding to religious convictions and compromising truth leaves man without a standard by which to properly judge his actions.** When trouble times come and there seems to be no easy way out, suicide is an alternative for many.

Phil. 4:13 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. The increase of all kinds of drugs, alcohol, and addictive medicines.** These are the means of escaping the problems of life. But after a while, even these do not help to make life meaningful. Possibly 60% or better of suicides are closely related to these things.

**Matt. 5:8**

---

---

**5. The high increase in sexual immorality is reaping its harvest.** That which God had designed only for marriage has been degraded to mere animal lusts. Such will bring its harvest that will leave people in deep despair.

**Gal. 6:7-8**

---

---

### **Bible Teaching about Suicide**

**1. Man did not create himself!** He is a creature that has been created by a loving God (Ps. 100:3). We all belong to God by creation "rights." (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:3). Therefore, we do not have the right to dispose of ourselves. Our lives belong to God and should be recognized by man; for God is the author of all living (Acts 17:25; 1 Tim. 6:13).

**2. Suicide is a breaking of the Law of God.** He is the Lawgiver and He has spoken—"***You shall not murder!***" (Exo. 20:13; Rom. 13:9). When a person takes his life, being rational, he is guilty of murder. The Apostle John states, by inspiration of God, that one who hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15), and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. It is important that we show proper respect for the life that God has given to us.

**3. Suicide is a selfish act.** God has given us life upon this earth—not for our own selfish ends, but to do good and bring glory to the name of our God (1 Cor. 10:31). The whole duty of man is to keep God's laws (Eccl. 12:13). When we take our life because of the many problems we face, we merely leave those problems for others to have to deal with—plus the effect that suicide will have on them also (Rom. 14:7). We have shirked our duties as a person made in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and have become the source of more problems for those who are left behind.

**4. Suicide shows that we do not value ourselves properly.** God wants us to see what it means to be redeemed, justified, sanctified, and adopted as spiritual children of God (1 John 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10). We certainly are not to think of ourselves or any man more highly than we should; but, at the same time God wants us to have a proper evaluation of ourselves and what He has given to us (Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 5:21). He certainly does not want us to "***receive the grace of God in vain.***" (2 Cor. 6:1). If God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves and our wives as we love our own bodies; He certainly does not want us to take our lives! (Matt. 22:39; Eph. 5:28).

**Can a Christian commit suicide and still be saved?**

It is obvious to the one who knows the Scriptures that people who have not been saved are considered lost—that is they have no promise of eternal life with God, whether they die by accident, illness, the intent of others, or by suicide. The Gospel is the power to save people (Rom. 1:16); but, they must have an opportunity to hear the Gospel (Rom. 10:14), believe the Gospel and openly confess it (Rom. 10:9-10), and obey the Gospel (2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 6:1-4; 6:16-18) in order to be saved. So, what if a person becomes a Christian and decides to take his own life—can he be saved eternally?

First, let's think about the Christian who commits suicide that is considered mentally ill—is he responsible for his actions? If he is, then he has sinned against God and his own self. If he is not responsible, then he will be judged by God on his life before his suicide.

Second, let's go a step further and look at a Christian who has faithfully lived the Christian life to the best of his ability, but problems have over-whelmed him and in a moment of weakness he takes his life. Was he wrong to take his life? Will he be saved or lost eternally because he took his life?

The issue now is not whether suicide is right or wrong; but, will the blood of Christ cleanse such a sin that we commit against ourselves. It is obvious that all Christians have problems with sin in their lives (1 Jn. 1:7-2:1). We will never be perfect, but we can be forgiven day by day as we continue to walk in the light and admit and ask for forgiveness. But suicide doesn't give us a chance to admit and ask for forgiveness. Will the blood of Christ still cleanse such an act against ourselves? None of us can know for a surety just how far the grace of God will extend to God's people. I know that we all would like to believe that His grace would forgive a Christian who did such a thing as suicide.

Please read and discuss the following Scriptures:

- Rom. 4:8** \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 11:6** \_\_\_\_\_
- Eph. 2:4-10** \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Phil. 3:8-9** \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Tim. 1:8-9** \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Tit. 3:3-8** \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Concluding Thoughts**

Christians are not saved eternally because they have already overcome all of their weaknesses and ignorance. It is true that a person can lose his salvation or be severed from Christ (Gal. 5:4) if he willingly turns from Christ.

**2 Pet. 2:20-22** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 6:4-6** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 10:26-27** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Heb. 3:12-15** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

While we may not be able to say for certain that a Christian who commits suicide can still be saved; yet, it should be obvious from Scripture that it is wrong to take an innocent life.

## Lesson Five

**"Capital Punishment"**

"Capital Punishment" is the expression that is used to describe the punishment of criminals by physical death. People in this country are on both sides of the issue as to whether it is right or wrong, just or unjust, or if God approves of such. The attempt to be fair and just and to make the punishment fit the crime has been a grave problem for mankind in general.

**Why are people against such punishment?**

1. It is advocated that it brutalizes society and cheapens life.
2. It is believed that it is morally indefensible.
3. It is advocated that it does not serve as a deterrent to murder.
4. The Bible forbids such—*"Thou shalt not kill."* (Exo. 20:13).
5. Mistakes are made and innocent people die unjustly.

**Why are people in favor of it?**

1. Justice demands such a punishment.
2. It stops the criminal from killing again and thereby protects society.
3. The majority favors such.
4. The Bible justifies such—*"Life for life, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth."* (Exo. 21:23-25).
5. It is less expensive on society.

While the above ideas have their merit in the eyes of those who advance them, what we are interested in is to see what God's Word says about the whole issue. The approach we will take is to look at every age of man, as revealed in the Scriptures, and how this question is dealt with in the Word of God.

**Early history of man in the Bible**

Cain killed his brother Abel! (Gen. 4:1-8). While there is no statement in the Scriptures as yet that murder is punishable by death, the wrongness of Cain's actions was obvious. While God did not pronounce the sentence of death upon him, there was the danger that others might punish him for his actions. God gave a special sign to protect him and Cain left the area to live in another location (Gen. 4:9-16).

The flood was God's punishment by death for the sins of the world! (Gen. 6:5-7). But notice, after the flood, what God had to say about murder.

**Gen. 9:6** \_\_\_\_\_

God's authority is behind capital punishment for murder. He gives as the reason for such...man is made in the image of God. It is possible that this concept has never been repealed by God. It is applicable for all time!

**Under the Law of Moses**

God called out the Israelite Nation to be a special people unto Himself for the purposes of God. He gave them a Law that governed them as a people. This Law was never given to the Gentile world—they were still under the general law of God (some call it the Patriarchal Law) (Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 147:19-20). This system is looked upon and called a "Theocracy"—that is, governed by God! There were not only laws for individuals, but laws for the nation as well. This law also taught capital punishment for murder—as well as for other things.

**Num. 35:31, 33** \_\_\_\_\_

It should be obvious from such passages as the above that the 6th commandment is not forbidding capital punishment. It is forbidding pre-meditated murder of innocent blood. God calls for the murderer's blood to be shed to atone for the innocent blood shed. It was to be carried out by properly constituted authority.

**The Example of Jesus with Pilate**

When Jesus was brought before Pilate and would not answer his question, Pilate reminded him: *"Do you not know that I have power to release you and power to crucify you?"* Jesus' reply was not....*"You do not have any power or right to do this."* But He did say to Pilate: *"You would have no power against me, except it was given to you from above."* (Jn. 19:10-11). The New Testament clearly indicates that governing powers are a part of God's plan for humanity—and their existence on earth.

**Rom. 13:1-7** \_\_\_\_\_

The Apostle Paul gave recognition to the right of governments to exist and to punish the evil doers when he was brought before Festus, the new Governor over the Jews in Judea.

**Acts 25:9-11** \_\_\_\_\_

### **What about under the Christian System?**

Under the Mosaic System (Law of Moses), their governing powers were regulated by God through His Law to Israel. But under the Christian System we have a different set-up. Christians live in various countries throughout the world and are governed by these countries. They are expected to respect these governments and live according to their dictates—unless it violates God's Law to the individual (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29). Thus, there seems to be two principles that we need to realize:

1. The principle of justice and morality that God expects of nations (Prov. 14:34; Psa. 9:17).
2. The principle of non-retaliation of the individual Christian (Matt. 5:38-42).

The church has not been set-up to deal with judgment and punishment of evil-doers in society, but to try to teach them and bring them to repentance and salvation. Individual Christians are not to seek vengeance, but to leave that to the systems God has established (Eph. 6:17; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; 10:3-4; Rom. 12:17-21). The church is God's minister of reconciliation to sinful man; while governments are God's ministers of wrath to the lawbreakers. (Rom. 13:1-7).

### **Thoughts for Discussion**

**What do you think about the following quotation?**

*"When people begin to believe that organized society is unwilling or unable to impose upon criminal offenders the punishment they 'deserve,' then there have been sown the seeds of anarchy—of self-help, vigilante justice, and lynch laws."*

**How would you deal with the following Scripture quotation?**

*"So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it."*

God wants man to learn that he will be recompensed by how he lives! He needs to learn obedience to both God and Governments—for he will not go unpunished for his wickedness (Gal. 6:7-8).

It is advocated that to kill the guilty person may keep him from the possibility of *"repentance unto life."* It is obvious that God loves all of mankind and is willing to forgive if we will turn to Him in obedient faith; but it does not necessarily remove the penalty of death that was justly passed upon him.

**Concluding Thoughts**

We believe that "capital punishment" is clearly commanded by God throughout the Bible. The indication is that Governments have been ordained by God to carry out this punishment. The biggest problem that most of us would have with this arrangement is the many mistakes or injustices that are and can be done by these governing powers. We must not let these mistakes invalidate God's arrangement—but rather, Christians should encourage governments to meet their obligations with justness and correctness. Christians have no biblical basis for being against "capital punishment."

Taking the life of another human being is not something to be happy about; but, our squeamishness should not keep us from accepting the plain teaching of Scripture nor from backing our government in doing what God has ordained for them to do.

It is important that we emphasize to the reader of this material that God expects us to see the harmony of His Scriptures and that they do not contradict themselves. A harmonious conclusion can be drawn over most issues if we are honest and open enough to look for the answers.

Lesson Six

**"The Importance of Moral Decisions"**

A young man is in college working hard with his studies but he could only make C's. He wanted to make good grades to show his parents he appreciated their help. There was a problem however; it involved a moral issue. One reason he was getting lower grades was because of so much cheating and copying.....and the teacher graded on a curve. What should he do? Should he accept lower grades and say nothing? Should he report the situation to the professor? Should he indulge in copying and cheating too? **What would you do? What decision would you make and why?**

A businessman was confronted with an opportunity to make a large sum of money quickly. It was legal, but he knew it was morally wrong. He could definitely use the money for himself, his family, to help build a needed school building, and/or other worthy causes. **Should he seize the opportunity to make the money? What would you do and why?**

Decisions like these have to be made throughout our lives—little ones and big ones! The first issue that has to be dealt with is—**is it moral or ethical?** When we realize there are moral issues involved, we need to have the courage to make the right decision—no matter the cost!

**Why be so concerned about moral decisions?**

Would you evaluate the following four reasons for being concerned and discuss and illustrate such.

**1. Our decisions bring consequences for good or bad upon ourselves and others.**

Gal. 6:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 6:23 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Our decisions will bring either happiness or unhappiness for ourselves and others.**

Ps. 1:1 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 8:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Take a close look at the "beatitudes" in Matt. 5:1-12. Who is the happy person? \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Our relationship to God and our fellow-man is dependant upon our decisions.**

**Matt. 22:37-40** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 13:10** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Most of the problems in society can be traced to a neglect or a rejection of correct moral decisions.**

**1 Tim. 4:1-3** \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Pet. 2:1-3** \_\_\_\_\_

What is your evaluation of the following quotation:

*"A new, more permissive society is taking shape. Its outlines are etched most prominently in the arts—in the increasing nudity and frankness of today's films, in the candid lyrics of pop songs, in erotic art and television talk shows, in freer fashions and franker advertising. "And, behind this expanding permissiveness in the arts stands a society in transition, a society that has lost its consensus on such crucial issues as premarital sex, marriage, and sex education." (Newsweek, Nov. 13, 1967)*

**Moral Judgments are inescapable!**

It is not a question of **IF** they should be made; but, they will be made—good or bad! Every day we live we will make these kinds of decisions. The real issue is—**upon what basis** will these moral judgments be made? From common sense and also from Biblical statements, man "intuitively" can know right from wrong!

**Rom. 2:12-15** \_\_\_\_\_

Unfortunately, the consciousness of right and wrong is often seared, damaged, undermined by man's selfishness and self-centeredness.

**1 Tim. 4:1-2** \_\_\_\_\_

Because of this, man needs a higher and more accurate standard by which to judge or make decisions. The Bible claims to be that guide for man. However, it is one thing to recognize our need of such a standard; but quite another thing to let it be our guide all the way.

**An Obvious fact!**

Mankind needs to know the Bible if it is going to help us in our decisions. Have you noticed the wide range of differences in judgments of those who claim to believe the Bible? Why is this so? Don't they all accept the Bible as being from God for man's guide? Even in the Lord's Church there is a wide range of differences. Do you think the following thoughts might help to explain these differences?

1. Some do not really respect God's Word.
2. Some don't want to be bound down by its teachings and principles.
3. They enjoy what they do and do not want to give them up.
4. Some do not know the Bible well enough to help them.
5. Some want to make right decisions, but have not grown sufficiently in the use of the Bible.

The Bible can help us in two ways:

1. By specific statements of what is right and wrong. (Gal. 5:19-21; 5:22-23).
2. By broad statement of principles.

When a decision has to be made, but the Bible does not deal with it in specific statements, then we have to turn to principles that can help us make the right decision. The Bible has quite a few of these clearly stated and illustrated—as follows:

**1. The exercise of my Christian Liberty (1 Cor. 8:1-13).**

- a) 1 Cor. 8:9 \_\_\_\_\_
- b) 1 Cor. 8:13 \_\_\_\_\_
- c) It is showing love and concern for a brother's soul.

**2. To be unselfish:**

- a) 1 Cor. 6:7 \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Greater things are at stake in this matter.

**3. Not to bring reflection upon the name of God:**

- a) 1 Cor. 10:31 \_\_\_\_\_

b) Rom. 2:21-24 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Do that which makes for peace and edifying:**

a) Rom. 14:19 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. By the fruit that comes:**

a) Matt. 7:20 \_\_\_\_\_

b) 1 Cor. 15:33 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. The Golden Rule:**

a) Matt. 7:12 \_\_\_\_\_

b) This is a broad principle by which to live. It automatically involves the negative also... "*What we do not want done to us, do not do to others.*"

**7. The general principle of love:**

a) Eph. 5:2 \_\_\_\_\_

b) Rom. 13:10 \_\_\_\_\_

**8. If there is a doubt....don't!**

a) Rom. 14:23 \_\_\_\_\_

b) Keep on the safe side when in doubt.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Moral decisions and judgments will be made day by day. It is very important that they are made on Statements and Principles from God's Word. Two factors will help determine the outcome of our decisions:

1. Whether our hearts have truly been turned to God or not;
2. Our over-all knowledge and understanding of Scriptures.

May I suggest that we all be willing to not only seek God's help, but go to the older, more mature, and more spiritually-minded Christians that can give us insights on how to make our judgments.



