

THOU SHALT NOT KILL



Every time a murderer is about to be executed for his crime, you are bound to see several protesters carrying signs outside of the prison, each displaying their objections to the death penalty. And of course, no protest would be complete without the media, with their cameras and in-depth editorial comment. Amongst those objecting to the execution are usually several ministers or priests, supposedly carrying out the will of God in teaching society that it is wrong to kill another human being under any circumstances. More than likely, they are carrying a sign that states “Thou shalt not kill.” Taken from a verse located in the Bible, the sign holder is trying hard to convince the viewers that the Bible teaches that executing a murderer is wrong.

The verse referred to in the protester’s sign is taken from the book of Exodus, chapter 20, verse 13. Opponents of the death penalty are quick to quote this verse when they argue against capital punishment, claiming that the prohibition against killing also applies to the government. The verse, “*Thou shalt not kill,*” is part of the Ten Commandments. It is one of the prohibitions given to man by God on Mount Sinai. Carved into the tablets of stone and given to Moses, these Commandments have been the basic building blocks for all of our current laws, ordinances, and statutes.

If you study the ordinance book in your city, you will realize that it is separated into separate sections. Each section addresses a different type of restriction. One section addresses the traffic code, one addresses the criminal code, and so on. Each one of these sections includes an offense portion of the code and a penalty portion of the code. The offense section comes first, followed by the penalty section.

Much like our present day law books, the book of Exodus is separated into different sections. It’s no coincidence that the manner in which our laws are constructed are very

similar to the manner in which the laws are constructed in the Book of Exodus. In chapter 20, God gives us the offense section, detailing the restrictions set on our behavior. It is in this section that we are instructed “*Thou shalt not kill.*” For those of you who think that the term “kill” is much too broad, I can very easily settle your mind. In the original Hebrew text, the term for this word is רָצַח, or “ratsach,” (pronounced raw-tsakh), which means to unjustly take a life. Basically, the word means to murder another person without just cause. For the protester ignorant of the real meaning of Biblical text (although he is using it to make a point), I would also point out that Jesus also addressed this issue when He reminded His followers of the commandments given to Moses years before. When Jesus addresses His followers in Matthew 5:21, He states “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill.*” Interestingly enough, the Greek word used by Jesus for the term “kill,” is φονεύω, or “phoneuo,” (pronounced fon-yoo’-o). This Greek word means “to commit murder,” or to “take an innocent life.”

So we’ve determined that the restriction on murdering another human being is located in the offense section of the book of Exodus, and that the restriction is on the taking of an innocent life, someone who has done nothing deserving of death. Like any restrictions set up by any governmental agency, this commandment expresses the will of the controlling agency. If you look up the traffic offense code in your state, you will find the restrictions listed along with a code number. In Ohio, you will find the restriction on exceeding the speed limit on public highways under section 4511.21 of the traffic code. You have to look a bit further to find the penalty section. There, you will find the punishment you can expect if you get caught by the police officer violating the speeding restriction.

It is in the following section, chapter 21 of the book of Exodus, that we are given the penalty section. Exodus 21:2 reads, “*Now these are the judgments which thou shalt set before them.*” God is instructing Moses to put before the people the penalty section for the offenses he has just described in the Ten Commandments. The penalty section describes the punishment for offenses against persons, property, and humanity. Why these “judgments,” as they are called, are not included in arguments about the death penalty are beyond me.

God certainly would not place a restriction on anyone unjustly taking another person’s life, if there were no consequence for such action. In Exodus chapter 21, we are given the penalty for murder. Exodus 21:12 reads “*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*” This certainly sounds like the death penalty to me! I’ve often wondered why the protester has omitted this portion of the law from his sign.

Let’s examine this penalty closely. The word “smiteth,” in the original Hebrew text is נָכָה, or “nakah,” (pronounced naw-kaw), which means to intentionally physically attack. This eliminates the possibility that the act was an accident. You will notice that the result of this intentional attack is the death of the person attacked. The verse indicates that a person who murders another person “shall be surely put to death.” This instruction

doesn't say that the murderer should "maybe" be put to death, it says "surely." The phrase "put to death" in the original Hebrew text is מוּת, or "muwth," and it means to "have one executed."

The rest of the penalty section in Exodus addresses the consequences for violations of other restriction. What is interesting here is the fact that the penalty fits the crime, not the criminal. There is no provision for the mental state of the offender. There is no exception for the mentally incompetent or the dysfunctional. There is no question whether the offender was abused as a child or grew up in poverty. The text is clear. If you do the crime, you do the time. Exodus 21:23-25 states "*thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.*" Is there any question here about crimes and penalties?

The Ten Commandments aren't the first set of instructions from God to mankind that involves the penalty for murder. Years before, when Noah and the ark was deposited on top of mount Ararat in what is now present day Turkey, God instructed Noah as to how his society was to be run. Noah was also supplied with an offense and penalty section of the code of conduct. In Genesis 9:6, God states "*Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*" I don't know about you, but this sounds a lot like capitol punishment to me!

An anti-death penalty protester once said "killin' is killin', it ain't right under any circumstances." Criminals appearing in court have fines imposed on them. They are forced to pay the court money against their will. Does that mean "robbin' is robbin', it ain't right under any circumstances?" Criminals are sentenced to jail to serve time. They are taken against their will and locked up in a room. Does that mean "kidnappin' is kidnappin', and it ain't right under any circumstances?" This line of thought is ridiculous. The government has the legal and moral right to impose penalties on its citizens for wrongdoing, including murder.

If we just stop for a minute and consider the argument that killing another human being is wrong under any circumstances, we will realize how ridiculous that notion is. We have all heard the term "justifiable homicide." The word "homicide" is used to describe the premature taking of another person's life. It includes murder, but is not always the unjustifiable taking of an innocent life, which is what the term "murder" means. A murder is always a homicide. A homicide is not always a murder.

Let's take the case of the robbery suspect who ended up cornered in the store with three innocent customers he was now holding as hostage. Surrounded by the police, he was asked repeatedly to give up and exit the store with his hands in the air. Repeatedly, he refused, demanding a getaway car and \$50,000 in cash. His threat to kill his hostages became very real when he shot one of the women he was holding, and threw her body outside the door onto the sidewalk. He again requested a car and cash, and stated that if

his demands were not met in one hour, another hostage would die.

A police sharpshooter soon advised his superiors that he was looking at the suspect through his scope, and that he had a clear shot inside the store. The decision was made by the officer in charge to take out the suspect. One round from a sniper rifle traveled through the window and into the suspect's head, killing him immediately. The two remaining hostages ran from the store and into the arms of their rescuers. The crime scene was secured and the suspect's body removed. What do you think happened when the sniper climbed down from his location? Do you think he was placed under arrest for murder? Give me a break!

Then there was the case of the soldier who, in 1943, was loaded onto a troupe carrier along with several hundred other draftees and began the trip toward Normandy beach. As they approached land, bullets began flying as the German army tried desperately to retain their stronghold on that strategic area. As the ramp was lowered, our soldier jumped into the water and headed for shore. As the troops attempted to scale the cliffs, it became evident that the German machine gun nests had to be eliminated. It was our soldier who reached the top first. He threw a hand grenade into the first bunker he spotted, immediately killing four German soldiers. As he moved inland, he shot and killed three more German soldiers. Soon, all of France was liberated, and the soldier was allowed to return home. What happened when the soldier disembarked from his ship onto friendly soil? Do you think the authorities were waiting to place him under arrest for seven counts of murder? Give me a break!

Then there was the young lady who had finally rented her own apartment in the heart of the city. She soon had it furnished with items she was able to afford with her new job. One night she awoke in her bedroom to a noise in the living room. She grabbed the handgun that she kept in the nightstand and cautiously ventured toward the direction of the noise. When she turned on the light, she discovered a large male wearing a ski mask and her VCR under his arm. Startled by the girl, the man suddenly whipped out a 45-caliber handgun and pointed it at the girl. Fortunately, the girl's gun was already drawn, and three shots later, the burglar was laying on the living room floor, bleeding from fatal wounds to his chest. After the 911 call, the police arrived, along with the coroner's van to transport the body of the suspect to the morgue. Do you think the police placed the girl under arrest for murder? Give me a break!

The argument by the liberal bleeding heart pacifist that taking another human life is wrong under any circumstances holds no water when scrutinized closely. Every time I see the protestor outside of a prison where an execution is scheduled holding a sign that says, "Thou shalt not kill," I wonder if other people realize how ignorant that protestor is. Yet he continues to carry signs that read "killing is wrong under any circumstances" and "revenge is for God, not man."

Numbers chapter 35 and verse 31 says *“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. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.”* Executing a cold-blooded killer is not “revenge.” According to the Bible, it is simply designed to “cleanse” our society. With thousands of murderers sitting in our prisons, the pollution index in our country is extremely high! According to the Bible, we must execute murderers. If the anti-death penalty advocate is going to protest an execution, he shouldn’t use the Bible to do so.