Compassion: Dealing with Crime & Punishment

Summary

Calling the Bible's toughest penalties an act of compassion sounds like a contradiction — until the doctrine of three future resurrections is factored in. This article makes that case directly, against what it sees as modern society's excuse-making toward crime.

- The claim that the Bible's stern penalties, including the death penalty for murder, are compassionate precisely because they're consistent with a God of love.
- Three future resurrections guaranteeing every unrepentant sinner — Attila the Hun and Adolf Hitler included — a later opportunity to learn Yahweh's truth.
- Punishment in this life framed as never a final, irreversible loss of that opportunity.
- Romans 13 and Matthew 26:52 cited for the New Covenant's own endorsement of civil authority and the sword.

- A closing case for swift, certain punishment as the only true deterrent to crime.

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News events inspire much discussion around criminal behaviour within our societies, as well as much "political" controversy over our approach to criminal punishment.

This chapter will take a look at how mankind, with a clear lack of compassion, has stubbornly rejected Yahweh's commandments involving implementation of swift and certain punishment for criminal behaviour.

The February 26th, 1994 issue of "The Economist", featured an article on our confused criminal justice system, which quite clearly "hit the nail on the head" - as far as it went: "The Menendez brothers, killers of their parents, make vague but theatrical claims of abuse, and their case ends in mistrial. The Bobbitts go to court, but she is acquitted of maliciously wounding him *[having endured years of humiliation],* and he is acquitted of harming her *[he has paid the price "up front"]*.

A serial killer throws himself on the mercy of the court in Florida: yes, he killed five students, raping several and arranging the severed head of one tastefully on a bookshelf; but his father had abused him, and angels and demons torment him. Two blacks bash in the head of a white *[truck]* driver with a brick, dance a little jig of joy, and are acquitted; they have been unreasonably provoked by the court verdict in the Rodney King case. It will not be long, at this rate, before mandatory sentence for a crime of violence is a `HUG AND A GOOD CRY'"!

Sadly, that quotation is an accurate portrayal of our modern social justice system. Much debate has raged in recent years over the "death penalty", however, as so-called "progressive" nations, we have substituted indulgence for discipline, notwithstanding our concerns over the validity of "punishing" criminals, or of the actual death penalty itself. The result is that our prisons are full to overflowing and our nations are inundated in violent crime. We have become too afraid to sternly PUNISH evildoers and we are vacillating in our determination to put into practice, our Yahweh-given instructions to CORRECT CRIME THROUGH DISCIPLINE!

The Bible clearly condemns murderers and other violent offenders to death, and sets out very stern punishment for a great number of other criminal offences.

Leviticus 24:17 tells us, "Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death". Numbers 35:30 clearly states, "Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient...for the death penalty". Similarly, Deuteronomy 19:11-13 states, "But if anyone hates his neighbor...and strikes him mortally, so that he dies... then...deliver him over to the avenger of blood, that he may die. YOUR EYE SHALL NOT PITY HIM, BUT YOU SHALL PUT AWAY THE GUILT OF INNOCENT BLOOD FROM ISRAEL, THAT IT MAY GO WELL WITH YOU".

Many people recognize the above verses, as well as many other verses of the Old Covenant that deal with what our societies perceive as "excessive" punishments for various crimes. They believe we are living in the "Christian" era, and that the grace of Yah'shua the Messiah has done away with the need for these stern corrective measures.

This misunderstanding comes as a result of forgetting the very vital fact that the Spirit that is in Yah'shua the

Messiah WAS FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE ENTIRE OLD COVENANT! As clearly explained in your Bible, "God" of the Old Covenant was "Elohim", an expression referring to the multi-faceted Yahweh the Father and it was through His Spirit that He made Yah'shua the firstborn Son of Himself by the resurrection. Many New Covenant verses such as Col. 1:12-13,15-17; Heb. 1:1-2, 2-20; John 1:18; 5:37; and 1 John 4:12, show that an aspect of Yah'shua the Messiah was with the God of the Old Covenant.

Hebrews 13:8 tells us that "Yah'shua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today, and forever"! By the authority of Yahweh the Father, who is the author and originator of the death penalty, He bolsters His words written in the Old Covenant with clear statements of support through Yah'shua in the New Covenant! Yah'shua said in Matt. 26:52, "for they that take the sword shall perish with the sword", and in Rev. 13:10, He inspired John to write: "He who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword".

"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. FOR THERE IS NO AUTHORITY EXCEPT FROM Yahweh, and the authorities that exist *[speaking of man's governments and courts]* are APPOINTED BY Yahweh. *[Which unfortunately,*

does not mean they are always OBEDIENT to Yahweh!] therefore whoever resists the ordinance of Yahweh *[including the Yahweh-appointed authorities],* and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves. For rulers are not [supposed to be] a terror to good works, but to evil...For he [a government or court official] is Yahweh's minister *["servant" or "magistrate" in some translations]* to you for good. But if you do evil be afraid; for he is Yahweh's minister [servant or magistrate], an AVENGER TO EXECUTE WRATH ON HIM WHO PRACTICES EVIL" *(Rom. 13:1-4).*

Yahweh is a God of love (1 John 4:8) and yet this God of love tells us that for our own good, those who commit wrong MUST BE CORRECTED! When understood, punishment, meted out in the proper manner, and at the proper time, is one of the greatest BLESSINGS a human being - at any age - can receive! Conversely, it is obviously the most COMPASSIONATE form of CORRECTION that can be expressed by Christians and Christian governments! It is the greatest act of LOVE there can be toward society and the criminal!

However, the self-defined "liberal" element of our societies, is constantly seeking means to indulge or

explain away the criminal's evil deeds by reason of "mitigating circumstances", that supposedly justify a lesser or softer sentence. Criminologists, social scientists, psychologists and others, are continually trying to pin down such excuses as genetic predispositions, poverty, abuse, emotional dysfunction, maleness and other equally spurious nonsense. This indulgent whining prevents deterrence of crime today!

We should not be trying to "understand" or indulge the criminal, we should be harshly punishing them with retribution so severe that they never want to commit crime again! And in the case of intentional murder, that severe punishment must be the death penalty! So says our great Yahweh who understands human nature and tells us in Jeremiah 17:9 that our nature *(without His help)* is deceitful and desperately wicked! Yahweh further tells us in Romans 6:23 that, "the wages of sin is death" - not separation from Yahweh - but physical DEATH which is merely the *(temporary)* absence of physical life.

There are "reasons" why people do things, but those reasons cannot be allowed to become excuses for which they are given leniency. Mankind continually makes excuses for his wrong behaviour, including his

stubborn disregard for Yahweh's instructions in dealing with criminals.

In Proverbs 19:18 Yahweh gives us principles that apply to disobedient children, juvenile delinquents, or hardened criminals. We are told, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying". An undisciplined child will "run out of time" and then there will be no *(or very little)* hope of correcting the juvenile delinquent and hardened criminal which may result because the parents were too "soft", during the child's early years, when they had the greatest hope of correcting the child's self-centered and destructive ways.

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him DISCIPLINES HIM PROMPTLY" *(Prov. 13:24).* For the benefit of society and the individual, swift, stern justice must be meted out when wrongs are brought to light. "BECAUSE THE SENTENCE AGAINST AN EVIL WORK IS NOT EXECUTED SPEEDILY, THEREFORE THE HEART OF THE SONS OF MEN IS FULLY SET IN THEM TO DO EVIL" *(Ecc. 8:11).* When wrong doing is not almost immediately punished, then all or almost all of the deterrent effect is lost.

"Whoever will not observe the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be executed SPEEDILY on him, whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment" *(Ezra 7:26)*. The criminal mind rarely respects authority. The only thing such a party respects is equal or greater FORCE! And when strong force is used immediately to severely punish an offender, it makes others "think twice" before acting likewise.

In the United States, where the death penalty has been re-instated, one District Judge reports that, "the public has lost confidence in the judicial system because of these seemingly endless delays [appeals]". Speaking further on the passage of vast amounts of time *(10 to 14 years)* between the offence and the final punishment, he went on, "it causes the heinous facts to be long since forgotten, and we are permitted to see only fleeting glimpses of a shackled condemned party, for whom there is an inevitable degree of sympathy". Quite obviously, the liberal press and other death penalty opponents are playing on our sympathies while trying to abolish all thought of the death penalty!

No sane party wants to execute another party. Any right-thinking individual has a certain sympathy for another, even if that other party deserves to die! Stern penalties, especially the death penalty, are as irreversible as the original crime itself. Therefore great care must be taken to ensure fair and honest trials. But human justice, implemented by humans who refuse to follow the guidance of the Eternal Yahweh, will make mistakes *(Jer. 10:23)!*

We cannot however, allow ourselves to further compound our mistakes, by stopping the wheels of justice or removing the deterrent effect of the death penalty, simply because we are afraid to make mistakes! To do so is a far greater mistake! A swift death penalty *(and all punishments)* was intended by our Creator to deter or restrain additional people from committing the same offence. To stop or delay the penalty because the courts are afraid to make a mistake, is in direct disobedience to Yahweh's clear laws!

Further, the courts, if run according to Godly principles, would not make the great many miscarriages of justice that they do presently! The British and Canadian governments, for example, abolished the death penalty because of the hanging of

innocent parties. In the United States, thousands of innocent parties are convicted and often imprisoned due to horrendous "plea bargaining" practices, where victims are cajoled into "accepting" guilty pleas on lesser charges, because prosecutors threaten extremely lengthy sentences if they fail to "cooperate".

This activity has tremendous impact on the prosecutors' "win-loss" ratio, and subsequent career promotions! In most instances, these prosecutors are "elected" to their positions, and of course, the political machine is such that a good "win-loss" record is of top importance! I won't even get into the travesties that befall those many thousands of innocents found guilty by our nations' courts, simply because they could not afford "adequate" defence counsel! Why does the truth need a defence anyway?

Instead of following the Yahweh-given, simple instructions of seeking the truth from two or three corroborating witnesses, our nations make a childish "contest" out of justice! Prosecutors and defence lawyers put "winning" versus "losing" the case, far ahead of fairly seeking the truth! Both "sides" tend only to present that "evidence", or that version of the evidence, that supports their "winning" objective! In other words, the system is not designed to present

only the truth - it is designed to offer each "side" an opportunity to see who can "present the best case", by "skilfully manipulating the facts" to their best advantage, which are merely euphemisms for who can lie the best!

It is absolutely shameful that grown men (and women) can behave in such a childish manner over something as important as meting out Yahweh's justice! In true justice, there is neither winner nor loser - there is simply the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth! No game-playing in terms of presenting "our" evidence and then "theirs", hoping to "sway" the jury to support one side versus the other! ALL EVIDENCE should be presented openly and in a totally unbiased fashion - only then will the truth be evident to a jury!

People can learn vicariously from the experience of others. "When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise", and "Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware" *(Prov. 21:11; 19:25).*

If a party thinks he can get away with murder because his sentence will eventually be commuted to a life sentence, then why should he fear to kill? That is why Mikell Smith almost fatally wounded a prison guard in 1989 after being sentenced to death in 1987 for the

1985 shotgun slaying of a schoolteacher! He no longer feared to kill! And lo and behold, the courts, in a display of their judicial incompetence, handed this mad dog a 500 year sentence instead of immediately putting him to death!

Many a career criminal has already proven he cannot "make it" in normal society; and if he murders, rapes, robs, or commits general mayhem, so what! Why should he fear? Even if he has murdered, the liberals will see to it that HIS life is "spared" so that we taxpayers can support him in a prison environment where he is "somebody" - a "man among men" so to speak!

After 11 years of appeals, the convicted murderer Charles Coleman was finally executed in 1990. The deterrent effect of the death penalty was still clearly seen. Fellow condemned murderer, Howard Marquez was quoted: "I felt the fear. I felt fear FOR MY LIFE!" Another murderer said: "Several people here [in the prison] are saying, `I don't have a chance. I'm going to be up there [in the death chamber] too. People here are scared to death'". Who says the death penalty has no deterrent effect! It even scares convicted murderers to death!

Why would a God of love prescribe such harsh penalties including execution? The answer is plainly revealed in your Bible as the RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. All unconverted sinners will be raised alive from the grave and THEN given a chance to learn and change - while the Messiah is ruling this earth! It is the knowledge of this resurrection that Yahweh has revealed to us, that gives us understanding of Yahweh's mind about the death penalty.

The simple truth in your Bible is that there will be three resurrections *(Rev. 20:4-15).* The first resurrection will be at the Messiah's Second Coming *(1 Cor. 15:23)* when He will resurrect to immortal spirit, those elect of Yahweh, who have been called and trained of Yahweh to be OBEDIENT in THIS lifetime.

The second resurrection will occur 1,000 years later *(Rev. 20:11-12).* Those then resurrected, will be given human physical bodies once again, and for the first time, will be given the opportunity to understand Yahweh's precious truth and learn to become OBEDIENT, so that they too, can be added to the immortal spirit-composed Family of Yahweh *(Eph. 3:14-15)*. This second resurrection is the missing key

to understanding how a God of love can be in favour of a death penalty.

The third and final resurrection will also be a resurrection to human physical life, but the end result will be eternal death - the "second death", because these few people, in their former physical life *(what we call THIS lifetime)*, understood Yahweh's truth and ways, but wilfully rejected that truth through rebellion or weakness *(Heb. 10:26-27; Rev. 20:13-15; 21:8)*.

Yahweh will then mercifully impose the eternal death penalty upon them to prevent the creation of another ever-living, wretchedly miserable murderer like Satan the devil *(John 8:44).* To understand how the death penalty can be a blessing, we must see Yahweh's perspective on human life. Human death means nothing to Yahweh, except a temporary sleep *(1 Cor. 15:51-55)*! Because Yahweh can *(and will)* resurrect all humans from the grave!

By imposing and carrying out harsh penalties such as the death penalty, we stop the examples of lawlessness in society which can corrupt others. It also prevents the criminal from continuing in a downward spiral of ever-deepening rebellion against Yahweh's laws which will produce an even more twisted and corrupted

human nature, with more deeply entrenched habits of evil which MUST BE CORRECTED when this party is resurrected in the second resurrection!

The all merciful Yahweh is even going to resurrect Attila the Hun and Adolf Hitler, along with every serial killer and mass murderer who has ever lived! Because most of these people did not receive the truth of Yahweh in their first lifetime, they will THEN have their minds opened, and will be given their first opportunity to learn Yahweh's truth and to become OBEDIENT to it in their second life! One opportunity - one time - is what every human being gets; some "few" will avail themselves of the opportunity NOW, and enjoy the "firstfruits" benefits of being with the Messiah for the millennium, while the "many" will receive their opportunity at the second resurrection, "after the thousand years were finished".

This is why the death penalty is implemented in love and with compassion! It deters others in this life from committing offences worthy of death, and it prevents violent or career criminals from continuing in their wrong ways, worsening and more firmly establishing their bad habits, which must be CORRECTED by a

loving Yahweh when He gives them their opportunity during their second lifetime!

How terrible it would be, if a party's life were to be forever "wasted", if their deeply entrenched bad habits prevented them from being corrected, simply because some over-indulgent "liberals" thought it best not to "punish" them in this lifetime!

How wonderfully compassionate is the pure and simple truth of the merciful Yahweh!

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