



Capital Punishment :- Continued

Those against capital punishment say that although the Hebrew Scriptures establish the death penalty for certain crimes, as Christians, we no longer follow the specifics of Old Testament law. Society has become more tolerant in line with the teaching of Jesus, and we have eliminated the death penalty for sins like:- pre-marital sex, practising a different religion, homosexual behaviour, blasphemy, rebellion by teenagers **AND SO** we should eliminate it for murder as well.

Jesus himself took a less severe stand on crimes that by Jewish law would result in death, (see adulteress John 8 v 1 – 11) and so set us a clear precedent. On many occasions Jesus taught that we should leave room for God's vengeance when people hurt us and our response should be to forgive them.

Point 2 – The Example of Jesus

For many Christians the real evidence against capital punishment is the example of Jesus Himself. Not only did He teach about forgiveness but, when confronted with false accusation and even crucifixion His response was not to bring God's wrath down on the people, but to say, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do!"

Point 3 – The belief and practice of the Early Church

For many Christians, the period of the independent and free church, in the first few centuries before it became a state or national institution, is when many believe it was at its purist. In this time the Christian church was a pacifist movement that did not believe that violence in any form was the way to truly witness to Jesus. There is no doubt that in these first years, both historians and theologians agree that the church would have completely been opposed to the death penalty.

Point 4 – Sanctity of Life

Those against Capital Punishment turn to the argument that all human life is precious even those who commit serious wrongs. After all God sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross for sinners. This puts a value on all human life whatever they have done. They say it makes no sense to kill people for killing people. How does this set an example and show that killing is wrong? It would be argued that the teaching of Jesus is all about breaking the circle of violence and retribution and freeing people to be rehabilitated.

Point 5 - There is a time to live and a time to die and that is in the hands of God.

One of the arguments that Christians use to undermine the death penalty surrounds the sovereignty of God. Because God is the Lord and giver of life, He is the only one who really has a right to take it. To take a life as a punishment is to stand in the place of God and possibly end people's life prematurely.

Point 6 – The possibility of Change.

It is argued that if we take the life of a murderer, or serious offender, we deny them the opportunity to come to repentance and consign them to hell. The Gospel is one that believes in the power of God to forgive and transform lives completely. It is true that many people who have done serious things wrong, including murder, have found Jesus in prison, become a Christian and now are leaders in Christ's church.

Discuss –

What do you think is the right argument to take in light of Christ?

If we do not go with the death penalty – How do we fully protect our society effectively from serious offenders?