

The Bible on Criminal Justice

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Key Verse:

Pr 24:25 But it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come upon them.

A Grim Picture Of Today

Hosea 4:2 KJV - There is only cursing, lying and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3:1 KJV - This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts,

7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all [men], as theirs also was.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Justice Defined and Demanded

Proverbs 24:25 KJV - But it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and rich blessing will come upon them.

Proverbs 17:15 KJV - Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent--the LORD detests them both.

Proverbs 24:24 KJV - Whoever says to the guilty, "You are innocent" --peoples will curse him and nations denounce him.

Proverbs 20:8 KJV - When a king sits on his throne to judge, he winnows out all evil with his eyes.

Proverbs 31:9 KJV - Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Proverbs 29:14 KJV - If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will always be secure.

Proverbs 17:26 KJV - It is not good to punish an innocent man, or to flog officials for their integrity.

Proverbs 20:26 KJV - A wise king sifts out the wicked, And brings the threshing wheel over them.

ROMANS CHAPTER 13:1 NIV - Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who

do so will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.

4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

6 This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing.

7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.

1 Peter 2:13-14 NIV - Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.

Principle Of Witnesses

Deuteronomy 19:15 NIV - One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offence he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Numbers 35:30 NIV - Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no-one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

Clarke's Commentary on De 19:15 and Nu 35:30: But one witness shall not testify against any] This was a just and necessary provision. One may be mistaken, or so violently prejudiced as to impose even on his own judgment, or so wicked as to endeavour through malice to compass the life of his neighbour: but it is not likely that two or more should be of this kind; and even were they, their separate examination would lead to a discovery of the truth, and to their conviction.

Theft

EXODUS CHAPTER 22:1 KJV - If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

2 If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, [there shall] no blood [be shed] for him.

3 If the sun be risen upon him, [there shall be] blood [shed] for him; [for] he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.

4 If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.

EXODUS CHAPTER 22:1 NIV - "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

2 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed;

3 but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. "A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.

4 "If the stolen animal is found alive in his possession-- whether ox or donkey or sheep--he must pay back double.

Clarke's Commentary on Verse 2: If a thief be found] If a thief was found breaking into a house in the night season, he might be killed; but not if the sun had risen, for then he might be known and taken, and the restitution made which is mentioned in the succeeding verse. So by the law of England it is a burglary to break and enter a house by night; and "anciently the day was accounted to begin only from sunrising, and to end immediately upon sunset: but it is now generally agreed that if there be daylight enough begun or left, either by the light of the sun or twilight, whereby the countenance of a person may reasonably be discerned, it is no

burglary; but that this does not extend to moonlight, for then many midnight burglaries would go unpunished. And besides, the malignity of the offence does not so properly arise, as Mr. Justice Blackstone observes, from its being done in the dark, as at the dead of night when all the creation except beasts of prey are at rest; when sleep has disarmed the owner, and rendered his castle defenceless."-East's Pleas of the Crown, vol. ii., p. 509.

Clarke's Commentary on Verse 4: He shall restore double.] In no case of theft was the life of the offender taken away; the utmost that the law says on this point is, that, if when found breaking into a house, he should be smitten so as to die, no blood should be shed for him; ver.#2|. If he had stolen and sold the property, then he was to restore four or fivefold, ver.#1|; but if the animal was found alive in his possession, he was to restore double.

Seduction and Premarital Sex (Fornication)

Ex 22:16-17 NIV - If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.

Clarke's Commentary on Verse 16: If a man entice a maid] This was an exceedingly wise and humane law, and must have operated powerfully against seduction and fornication; because the person who might feel inclined to take the advantage of a young woman knew that he must marry her, and give her a dowry, if her parents consented; and if they did not consent that their daughter should wed her seducer, in this case he was obliged to give her the full dowry which could have been demanded had she been still a virgin. According to the Targumist here, and to #De 22:29|, the dowry was fifty shekels of silver, which the seducer was to pay to her father, and he was obliged to take her to wife; nor had he authority, according to the Jewish canons, ever to put her away by a bill of divorce. This one consideration was a powerful curb on disorderly passions, and must tend greatly to render marriages respectable, and prevent all crimes of this nature.

Adultery

Exodus 20:14 NIV - "You shall not commit adultery.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 22:22-24 NIV - If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death--the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

Clarke's Commentary on Verse 22: Shall both of them die] Thus we find that in the most ancient of all laws adultery was punished with death in both the parties.

Leviticus 20:10 NIV - If a man commits adultery with another man's wife-- with the wife of his neighbour--both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

Deuteronomy 5:18 NIV - You shall not commit adultery.

Job 24:15 NIV - The eye of the adulterer watches for dusk; he thinks, 'No eye will see me,' and he keeps his face concealed.

Psalms 51:1 KJV - [For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.] Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 SAMUEL CHAPTER 12:7 KJV - *And Nathan said to David, Thou [art] the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

8 *And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if [that had been] too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.*

9 *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife [to be] thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.*

10 *Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*

11 *Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give [them] unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.*

12 *For thou didst [it] secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*

13 *And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*

14 *Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also [that is] born unto thee shall surely die.*

Proverbs 6:26 NIV - ...for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life.

Proverbs 6:32 NIV - But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.

Proverbs 22:14 NIV - The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit; he who is under the LORD's wrath will fall into it.

Proverbs 30:20 NIV - This is the way of an adulteress: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, 'I've done nothing wrong.'

Matthew 5:28 NIV - But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 15:19 NIV - For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander...

JOHN CHAPTER 8:3 NIV - The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group.

4 *and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.*

5 *In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"*

6 *They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger.*

7 *When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."*

8 *Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

9 *At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.*

10 *Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no-one condemned you?"*

11 *"No-one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

Hebrews 13:4 NIV - Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

Rape

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 22:25 NIV - But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die.

26 Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders his neighbour,

27 for the man found the girl out in the country, and though the betrothed girl screamed, there was no-one to rescue her.

28 If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, 29 he shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

Homosexuality, Lesbianism, Incest, Bestiality

ROMANS CHAPTER 1:24 NIV - Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is for ever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worth while to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips,

30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

32 Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practise them.

LEVITICUS CHAPTER 18:1 NIV - The LORD said to Moses,

2 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `I am the LORD your God.

3 You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices.

4 You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God.

5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

6 ""No-one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

7 ""Do not dishonour your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

8 ""Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonour your father.

9 ""Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

10 ""Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonour you.

11 ""Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

12 ""Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

13 ""Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

14 ""Do not dishonour your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

15 "*Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.*

16 "*Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonour your brother.*

17 "*Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.*

18 "*Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.*

19 "*Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period*

20 "*Do not have sexual relations with your neighbour's wife and defile yourself with her.*

21 "*Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.*

22 "*Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.*

Clarke's Commentary on Verse 22.: With mankind] This abominable crime, frequent among the Greeks and Romans as well as the Canaanites, may be punished with death in this country.

23 "*Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.*

28 *And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.*

29 "*Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people.*

Clarke's Commentary on the expression "cut off.": There are thirty-six places in which this excision or cutting off is threatened against the Jews for neglect of some particular duty; and what is implied in the thing itself is not well known. Some think it means a violent death, some a premature death, and some an eternal death. It is very likely that it means no more than a separation from the rights and privileges of an Israelite; so that after this excision the person was considered as a mere stranger, who had neither lot nor part in Israel, nor any right to the blessings of the covenant. This is probably what St. Paul means, #Ro 9:3|. But we naturally suppose this punishment was not inflicted but on those who had showed a marked and obstinate contempt for the Divine authority. This punishment appears to have been nearly the same with excommunication among the Christians; and from this general notion of the cutting off, the Christian excommunication seems to have been borrowed.

Kidnapping

Deuteronomy 24:7 NIV - If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you.

Murder

Proverbs 28:17 NIV - A man tormented by the guilt of murder will be a fugitive till death; let no-one support him.

1 Peter 4:15 NIV - If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

Exodus 20:13 NIV - You shall not murder.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 35:6 NIV - "Six of the towns you give the Levites will be cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone may flee. In addition, give them forty-two other towns.

9 ¶ Then the LORD said to Moses:

10 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When you cross the Jordan into Canaan,

11 select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee.

12 They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he

stands trial before the assembly.

13 These six towns you give will be your cities of refuge.

15 These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites, aliens and any other people living among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there.

16 "If a man strikes someone with an iron object so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death.

17 Or if anyone has a stone in his hand that could kill, and he strikes someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death.

18 Or if anyone has a wooden object in his hand that could kill, and he hits someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death.

19 The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.

20 If anyone with malice aforethought pushes another or throws something at him intentionally so that he dies

21 or if in hostility he hits him with his fist so that he dies, that person shall be put to death; he is a murderer.

The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

22 "But if without hostility someone suddenly pushes another or throws something at him unintentionally

23 or, without seeing him, drops a stone on him that could kill him, and he dies, then since he was not his enemy and he did not intend to harm him,

24 the assembly must judge between him and the avenger of blood according to these regulations.

25 The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the avenger of blood and send him back to the city of refuge to which he fled. He must stay there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with holy oil.

26 "But if the accused ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which he has fled

27 and the avenger of blood finds him outside the city, the avenger of blood may kill the accused without being guilty of murder.

28 The accused must stay in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; only after the death of the high priest may he return to his own property.

29 "These are to be legal requirements for you throughout the generations to come, wherever you live.

30 "Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

31 "Do not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die. He must surely be put to death.

32 "Do not accept a ransom for anyone who has fled to a city of refuge and so allow him to go back and live on his own land before the death of the high priest.

33 "Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

34 Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the LORD, dwell among the Israelites."

My Own Insights On Criminal Justice

Read Romans Chapter 13

Handling a Criminal Offense Against Yourself, a Family Member, or a Friend:

As far as you are personally concerned, forgive the criminal from your heart. As far as the preservation of public order is concerned, seek the administration of justice.

(You might even be able to lead the criminal to Christ after their crime against you, but the criminal will never sit still long enough to consider their crime or to consider repentance and faith in Jesus unless they have been appropriately [depending on the level of crime] punished, fined, or imprisoned.)

Romans 13:2,4 NIV - "Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling...and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves...if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer."

1 Timothy 1:8-10 NIV - "We also know that the law is made...for lawbreakers and rebels..for those who kill..for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers..."

Matthew 5:44 KJV - Love your enemies...pray for them...

Mercy and Justice work together; they are not antithetical. God's justice drives us to His mercy. His mercy drives us to be just.

Psalms 85:10 KJV - "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Proverbs 16:6 KJV - "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil."

Proverbs 20:26,28 KJV - "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them...Mercy and truth preserve the king: and his throne is upheld by mercy."

Matthew 23:23 TLB - "...the important things -- justice and mercy, and faith..you shouldn't leave the more important things undone."