

Loving Christ in All of Life
Week 6 - Crime and Punishment
Genesis 9:5-6, Romans 12:19-13:7

- God's principle of justice is **restitution** (restoring what has been damaged by sin) through **retribution** (receiving what is deserved)
 - In the atonement, Christ made restitution (restored creation to God) through retribution (receiving what our sin deserves)
 - This standard of justice is binding in every area of life
- When we deviate from God's standard, we replace it with our own ideas about justice - autonomy
 - Justice is primarily concerned with deterrence - justifies both excessively harsh or lenient penalties for crime
 - Criminal penalties are for reforming/rehabilitating offenders
 - Modern prison system/"Criminal Justice Reform"
 - Denies civil penalties are a matter of justice at all, denies need for restitution
- The civil penalties of God's law are rooted in the principles of restitution and retribution
 - God has delegated authority to the state to carry out these principles in civic life
 - Affirming God's standard of justice should naturally lead to looking to His word for instruction and examples of how to apply civil justice
 - Ex. 21:28-22:6 - case law examples demonstrate principles of justice in action
 - The guilty receives what is deserved, the victim is made whole
 - Lev. 6:1-5 - not just a matter of personal repentance - law is given in a civil context
 - God's standard is proportional and just - we have no right to ignore it
 - Lev. 24:17-22 - justice is blind, proportional, without favoritism or pity
 - Scripture is consistently clear that God's **vengeance** is carried out by the civil magistrate in this life, **not** by private persons (Matt. 5:38-39, Rom. 12:19, 13:4)
- Man's authority in this office flows from his being in the image of God - Gen. 9:5-6
 - Reason why **man** is to carry out God's punishment for crime is because **man** is God's representative - state is obligated to carry out God's vengeance according to His law
- All the nations—not just covenant Israel—are held to this standard of justice
 - Prov. 14:34 - universal truth, applicable to "any people" (ethnicity, nation)
 - Nations around Israel were judged according to the standards of God's law
 - Jude 7, Lev. 18:24-30, Amos 1:3-2:3, Jonah 3:6-10, Nah. 2:13-3:4
 - Gentile kings influenced by God's people ruled in accord with His law
 - Dan. 3:29, Dan. 6:26, Ezra 7:23-26
 - Exhortations of Romans 13 are in keeping with the same principle

- Citizens are obligated to submit even to pagan governments because they are appointed by God
 - Magistrates are obligated to rule according to God's law because they are appointed by God
 - The standard given is to reward good and punish evil according to God, and the sword (Gen. 9) is given to enforce justice **on God's behalf**
- Three major (reformed) dissenting perspectives
 - "Intrusion Ethics" - Civil penalties along with conquest of Canaan and imprecatory psalms are an intrusion of God's ethical standard to be fully applied at the judgment
 - Canaan was specific, particular, and limited by Scripture itself; civil penalties are not
 - "Common Grace" kingdom fully rooted in Genesis 9 - scope of civil government in the New Covenant era is limited to God's commission in the Noahic Covenant
 - Arbitrarily favors part of Scripture over others
 - Doesn't fully reconcile with Romans 13 exhortations
 - Penalties of the law fulfilled in Christ in the same way ceremonial law is
 - No Scriptural basis - cannot read civil penalties into Hebrews argument
 - If Christ fulfilled the judicial as well as the cosmic penalties of the law, there is no ground for *any* capital punishment (or any other civil punishment) of crimes today