

# ***Command #6 – Thou Shalt Not Kill***

## **Outline**

### **I • What is meant by *Thou Shalt Not Kill* ?**

#### **A. The Hebrew word (*rasach*) in Exodus 20:13 means “murder”**

##### **1. Other words are used in the OT for non-murderous killing**

- a. Killing an animal for food (Gen. 9:3)
- b. Defending oneself in an attack (Ex. 22:2)
- c. Purely accidental death (no violent intent) or manslaughter (Num. 35:25; Deut. 19:5)

##### **2. God does not indicate the specific penalty for murder in the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment**

#### **B. In examining the Mosaic Law, God differentiates between manslaughter and murder**

##### **1. Murder is described as ... death caused by a personal choice to be intentionally violent [punishment >> death]**

- a. Intentional violence with the intent of killing (premeditated/1<sup>st</sup> degree) (Ex.21:14)
- b. Intentional violence with accidental death (2<sup>nd</sup> degree) (Ex. 21:12)

##### **2. Manslaughter is described as ... accidental death caused by activity with no malicious intent [punishment >> confinement] (Ex. 21:13)**

- a. God provided cities of refuge for those who were guilty of manslaughter (Num. 35:10-15)
- b. Manslaughter had some life-altering consequences, but the person was not guilty of murder and therefore was not executed (Num. 35:16-28)

### **II • Some questions that arise from *Thou Shalt Not Kill***

#### **A. Does this command include killing in the situation of war?**

##### **1. There are many examples of God commanding Israel to kill their enemies**

- a. God commanded the Israelites to kill the Midianites (Num. 25:16-18)
- b. God commanded the killing of all the occupants of Jericho (Josh. 6:17)
- c. God commanded the complete destruction of the Amalakites (1 Sam. 15:2-3)

##### **2. Israel was uniquely led by God when they were commanded to engage in war as an aggressor (therefore the issues for our country do not immediately coincide)**

- a. We are not a theocracy, as Israel initially was, being led directly by God
  - 1) God spoke to Moses and/or Aaron over 150 times
  - 2) God spoke to Joshua
  - 3) God spoke to Gideon
  - 4) God spoke to Samuel (1 Sam. 8:5-8)
- b. We are not a monarchy, with kings and prophets receiving direct revelation from God
  - 1) The prophet Samuel
  - 2) King Saul -1 Sam. 14:35-37
  - 3) King David
  - 4) King Solomon
  - 5) The prophet Micaiah (1 Ki. 22:6-8) and other prophets
- c. We are not maintaining or acquiring land that was promised to us by God (Gen. 17:8-9; Judg. 2:1)
- d. We are not God’s chosen nation from among all other nations (2 Sam. 7:23)

- 3. The Bible is realistic about the nature of man and the eventuality of war**
    - a. God intentionally used war to accomplish his purpose for Israel (Deut. 4:34)
    - b. God also commanded peaceful relations with other nations, even nations that were openly hostile toward Israel.
      - 1) Edomites (descendants of Esau) (Deut. 2:4-5)
      - 2) Moabites (Deut. 2:9)
      - 3) Ammonites (Deut. 2:19)
    - c. Even though peace is to be preferred over war, there is a time for peace and a time for war (Psalm 120:6-7; 144:1; Eccl. 3:1,8; 9:18)
  - 4. Wartime killing is not an individual decision to kill, but the decision of a nation to engage in war which will (of necessity) result in its soldiers killing people from another nation**
  - 5. It should be considered normal that each individual would have a different level of sensitivity regarding their own personal involvement in the killing of another person in the situation of war, or in any situation**
- >>Therefore ... war does not equal murder

## **B. Does this command include capital punishment?**

- 1. The Law included capital punishment for a variety of sins**
  - a. Premeditated Murder
  - b. Violent activity that ended in death
  - c. Death caused by a vicious animal that had a habit of attacking people
  - d. Blasphemy against God
  - e. Inciting others to idol worship (false prophets)
  - f. Idol worship
  - g. Sacrificing children to idols
  - h. Consulting the spirits—Satanic practices
  - i. Working on the Sabbath
  - j. Approaching the tabernacle before it is completely set up (non-Levites)
  - k. Approaching the tabernacle sanctuary (non-Aaronic priests)
  - l. Kidnapping a person
  - m. Physically attacking your parents
  - n. Verbally cursing your parents
  - o. Contempt for & refusal to submit to the ruling of a judge
  - p. A variety of sexually related sins
  - q. Even for an unsolved murder/death ... even then a heifer had to be killed
- 2. Capital punishment for murder was first instituted by God after the flood, in response to the pervasive violence in the days of Noah (Genesis 9:5-6)**
  - a. Murdering a human being dishonors God because man is created in the image of God
  - b. Even though man is imperfect in his judgment, God still called for man to carry out the death penalty in response to “shedding blood”
  - c. The specifics of personal vs. national responsibility to carry out the act of the death penalty are not addressed in this covenant
- 3. The natural power of governing authorities to exercise capital punishment is affirmed in the New Testament**
  - a. When Pilate claims to have the power to kill or release Jesus, Jesus responds by saying that Pilate’s authority to kill comes only from God (John 19:11) [the Greek for “from above” is referring to heavenly authority, not higher ranks of authority on earth]
  - b. Paul acknowledges Festus’ authority to kill him; there is no sense that it is unjust for the governing authority to exercise the death penalty against Paul (Acts 25:11)
  - c. Paul instructs believers to be in submission to the governing authorities who have the power of life and death (Romans 13:1-7)

- 1) It is reasonable for the law-breaker to fear the “state” since it does not “bear the sword for nothing” [the word for “sword” here is an executioner’s sword, not a sword used for battle] (v. 4a)
- 2) The “state” is acting as an agent of God when using lethal force “on the one who practices evil” (v. 4b)
- 3) The ability of the “state” to exact capital punishment is connected with the same authority that it has to collect taxes (v. 6)
- d. Peter emphasizes as well that human governors are sent by God “for the punishment of evildoers” (1 Peter 2:13-14)

**4. Does the ending of the Law bring an end to all capital punishment?**

- a. The specific commands of the Law are not applicable to the church age (Gal. 3:23-25)
- b. The post-flood covenant of God that promises to all people never to again destroy the earth with a flood, also includes God’s command to all people to execute those who shed blood (Gen. 9:6, 11)
- c. The ending of the law may mean that all nations are left only with command to Noah for all man-kind to use the death penalty for murder
- d. Many would observe situations in which God did not carry out the death penalty
  - 1) Cain was not put to death (Gen. 4:8, 14-15)
  - 2) The woman caught in adultery was not put to death (John 8:3-11)
- e. It is worthy of our time to dig deeper into the Word before we reach a conclusion on this issue

**5. Based upon the apostle Paul’s teaching in Romans 13, the power of execution resides with a nation, not the individual**

**>>Therefore ... even if there is disagreement about the wisdom of using capital punishment today, the Bible is clear than the death penalty does not equal murder**

**C. Does this command include killing in self-defense?**

- 1. The law did not consider a person guilty if, in defending their property in the night, the thief is struck and dies (Ex. 22:2)**
- 2. The law did consider a person guilty if the event took place during the day and the person is struck and dies (Ex. 22:3a)**
  - a. Perhaps because a person can see more clearly what they are doing in the daylight and couldn’t claim that they didn’t intend lethal force
  - b. Perhaps during the day a person could enlist the needed help from others to protect their property from a thief, removing the need for lethal force
  - c. The guilt the individual who killed a thief while protecting his property in the daytime would have to be judged to be determined whether the act was murder or manslaughter, based upon the situation
- 3. This provision in the law is not excuse for vengeance against a thief, but allows for the fact that a violence struggle in the night could potentially cause a person’s death (Lev. 19:17-18; Rom. 12:17-19)**
- 4. The Lord recognizes the value of human life, even though a person may be in the middle of wrongdoing at the time of death (Ex. 22:3a)**

**>>Therefore ... killing in purely self-defense (not in revenge) is not murder**

**D. Does this command include abortion?**

- 1. In the Bible, there are no specific situations of intentionally induced abortions for the purpose of ending a pregnancy.**
- 2. One of the blessings promised by God to Israel for national obedience was that they would be spared from spontaneous abortion (miscarriage). (Ex. 23:25-26)**
- 3. The Bible does address the unique value of all human life (Gen. 1:27; 9:5-6)**

4. **The Law provided for the death penalty if violent activity toward a mother caused the premature birth of a baby and the baby died (Ex. 21:22-25; Lev. 24:17-22)**
  5. **The Bible indicates that the unborn baby is a person even before birth**
    - a. God's concern and activity in a person's life is extended even to pre-natal life (Psalm. 139:13)
    - b. In the case of Jeremiah, the Lord speaks of pre-natal personhood (Jer. 1:5)
      - 1) "I knew you"
      - 2) "I consecrated you"
      - 3) "I have appointed you [to be] a prophet"
    - c. David speaks of his own sinfulness even at the point of conception, indicating pre-natal guilt of sin (if an unborn baby is a non-person, then sin-guilt is impossible) (Ps. 51:5)
  6. **The Bible gives us many reasons to consider all life as being a sacred gift from God, whether unborn, young, middle-aged or old ... regardless of productivity, quality of life or the ability to be self-sustaining.**
- >>Therefore ... intentionally induced abortion is murder
7. **If indeed a person is guilty of abortion, the ability of God to "forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness" is no less true than for any other sin. (1 John 1:9)**

### **III • Does my heart embrace the command, *Thou Shalt Not Kill* ?**

#### **A. Do I value human life the way that God does?**

1. Humans are a special creation of God made in His image
2. People are valuable and should be treated with proper respect
3. Life is a gift that is given by God to be used for His glory
4. Death is an awful thing and exists as a result of the curse of sin
5. People have souls and will spend eternity somewhere
6. I should reject any way of thinking that treats human life as insignificant

#### **B. Do I conduct myself in a way that is consistent with the way God views human life?**

1. Do I recognize that human life is sacred, set apart from the rest of God's creation?
2. Do I treat people with the respect due an image-bearer of God?
3. Do I live as a steward of the life that God has given me?
4. Do I engage in activities that diminish the sacredness of life and the reality of death?
5. Do the things that I allow to engage my mind corrupt a proper view of the gift of life and the scourge of death?
6. Do I concern myself with the salvation of the lost?

#### **C. What truly provides the framework for my view of life and death?**