

You Shall Not Murder

“Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). That was God’s command as part of the Ten Commandments, and it is reinforced in the New Testament. In Romans 13:9, the apostle Paul refers to this commandment. There he writes, *“For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.”* We must determine from the Bible what kind of killing is prohibited by the command, *“Thou shalt not kill.”*

First of all, let us notice what is **not** included in the command. It does not mean that killing animals for food is wrong. *“Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; As the green herb have I given you all”* (Gen. 9:3). These words were spoken to Noah, but they were meant for all mankind for all time. In 1 Timothy 4:4-5 the apostle Paul wrote, *“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”*

Also, *“Thou shalt not kill”* does not mean that it is wrong for a soldier or a policeman to perform his duty in a justifiable cause. Paul wrote in Romans 13:4, *“for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.”* In the Old Testament, the same God who said, *“Thou*

shalt not kill,” told Israel to destroy her enemies. *“Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass”* (1 Samuel 15:3). That was God’s divine judgment upon those people who had opportunity to know God; yet they rebelled against Him, and God destroyed them. Thus, the execution of the duties of a soldier or a policeman in a justifiable cause are not condemned by the command, *“Thou shalt not kill.”*

Also, this command *“Thou shalt not kill”* does not mean that capital punishment is wrong. An Israelite who suggested serving other gods, for instance, was to be killed (Deuteronomy 13:6-9). A person who practiced homosexuality was to be put to death (Leviticus 20:13). Adulterers and adulteresses were to be killed (Leviticus 20:10). Murderers were to be put to death (Numbers 35:30-31). It is still God’s will that those who commit murder shall be put to death. This is capital punishment. There is an eternal principle established in Genesis 9:6. *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”*

The apostle Paul understood that the government had the right to put offenders to death. In Acts 25:11, he says: *“If then I am a wrong-doer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die...”* Paul, by implication, endorsed capital punishment. The world needs to appreciate, accept, and apply this Biblical teaching today.

Now that we have seen what the command *“Thou shalt not kill”* does not mean, let us see what is included in this prohibition.

Murder is forbidden in this command. Jesus understood the sixth commandment to forbid

murder, as recorded in Matthew 19:18. However, Jesus went beyond the physical act of murder to condemn those who hated their fellow man (Matthew 5:21-22; 1 John 3:15). The Lord dealt with the attitude as well as the action itself. But, what is murder? Murder is defined as “the unlawful, malicious, and intentional killing of one human being by another.” Murder is forbidden. This prohibition against murder carries through from Old Testament to New. *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (Galatians 5:19-21).

In addition to the common definition of murder, there are three other acts which amount to murder. One of these is abortion. The two other forms are euthanasia (the so-called mercy killing, killing of the elderly, or those who are hopelessly ill) and suicide, or self-murder. But the remainder of this study will deal with abortion.

Funk & Wagnall’s Dictionary defines abortion as “a miscarriage produced artificially.” Why is abortion wrong? Abortion is wrong because life is a gift from God. Genesis 1:27 points out that God made man in His image and He placed the spirit of man in him at conception, not at birth. Therefore, to take that life deliberately is murder. How do we know life begins at conception? The Bible tells us so. There is a Greek word, *βρέφος*

(brephos), which is found eight times in the New Testament. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* says it refers to "an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a newborn child, an infant, a baby." It refers to the child in the womb, as well as to the child outside the womb. There is no distinction.

In Luke 1:15, John was said to be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. *"And it came to pass, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit"* (Luke 1:41). Here was the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth. The angel had appeared to Mary and told her that she would conceive, *"And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS"* (Luke 1:31). Then in verses 36 and 37 we read: *"And behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren. For no word from God shall be void of power."* Then verses 39 and 40: *"And Mary arose in these days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah; and entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth."* These are the verses leading up to the verse 41 previously quoted which says that the babe *"leaped in her womb."* The babe (βρέφος) leaped in her womb! That is a significant statement. Yes, life begins at conception and not at birth.

Is the unborn child alive or dead? There is no question about the fact that he is alive. Is he animal or human? He is human. Is he endowed with a spirit from God? Yes, the unborn child possesses an eternal, immortal spirit. *"Let us make man in our image,"* the Bible says. Man is made in the spiritual

image of God, with an immortal spirit. That spirit certainly is within that child before he is born.

An Old Testament passage which reinforces the fact that abortion is a form of murder is Exodus 21:22-25. This is legislation pertaining to a situation in which an unborn child might be harmed. *"If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."*

"So that her fruit depart from her," when this struggle occurs, *"and yet no mischief follow,"* means the woman delivered the baby, but there was no damage to the child. In that case, the one causing the premature delivery paid a fine according to what the husband determined. But the text says, *"if any mischief follow,"* meaning the child was injured or died, then, it was *"eye for eye," "tooth for tooth,"* and *"life for life."* The one who caused the death of the unborn child paid with his life. How could there be a clearer passage revealing how God views the unborn child? He is a child created in the image of God, while yet in the womb. To take that life by abortion in order to end an unwanted pregnancy is murder. **Murder is sin!**



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