

The Holy Bible: Christianity and the Death Penalty

By Ronald W. Clark, Jr.

The Holy Bible does support the death penalty. Yet there are a lot of ifs, ands and buts about it. So let's take a little trip through the scriptures. It says in Genesis 9:6 "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed..." and in Exodus 21:23-24 "And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." Further in Deuteronomy 19:21 "And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Those scriptures support the death penalty but here are the ifs, ands and buts about it. Deuteronomy 17:6 "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death."

Now those are the laws God provided Moses. Our death penalty laws in America do not require one witness. All that is required is circumstantial evidence to take a man's life. This is a fact. Twenty-three innocent lives were taken last century by America's death penalty and those are only the ones we know about. How many others have slipped through the cracks?

These scriptures are all from the Old Testament. Which, by the way, is the Old Covenant and the foundation of Judaism.

Let's take a look at one other scripture before moving on to the New Testament. Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days come saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord; But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, for the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

So as you can see Jeremiah speaks of the New Covenant which is the precious blood of our Savior Jesus Christ which is a loving, forgiving, compassionate covenant.

Paul wrote in Hebrews 7:22 "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament" and he goes further to write in Hebrews 8:8-13 "For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their heart: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away".

Now one of the scriptures in the New Testament that I've seen Christians try to use to support the death penalty is Matthew 5:17-18 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." But it was fulfilled on the third day when Christ rose from the tomb. If we look at Matthew 26:56 "But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled" and Paul writes in Acts 3:18 "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouths of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled."

So when Jesus says in Matthew 5:38-39 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." What He's saying is don't take revenge. Lets take a look at some of the other scriptures and Jesus' teachings. He says in John 15:12 "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." and when one of the scribes asked about the first commandment of all Jesus replied in Mark 12:30-31 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Lets take a look at what Jesus says in Luke 6:27-33 "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? For sinners also do even the same." Verses 32 and 33 say a lot; for it's easy to love those that love us. But can you say the same about your irate boss, annoying co-worker or nosy neighbor?

All throughout the New Testament Jesus teaches forgiveness, compassion, mercy and love. Not once does he teach on vengeance or hate. Once confronted on the death penalty here is what Jesus had to say in John 8:3-11 "And the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayeth thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemn thee? She said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. So as we can see no vengeance whatsoever was applied there. Jesus stood strong on his teachings of love, forgiveness, compassion and mercy.

What do these words, revenge, vengeance and fury, have in common with the teachings of Christ? Look at their definitions: **revenge** (desire to take vengeance), **vengeance** (with great force or fury) and **fury** (violent anger - wild rage). Absolutely nothing and that's my point! Yet

those three words are what the death penalty is about. So a true Christian, a follower of Christ, cannot support the death penalty here in America or through out the world. This scripture comes to mind in Luke 6:46 "Jesus said And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

There is one thing that Christ had in common with the death penalty and that is the Romans took his innocent, precious life with it.

Let's remember what Paul writes in Ephesians 4:31-32 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

If you would like to learn more about the Death Penalty or show your support, please visit the website www.moratoriumcampaign.org or write to The Moratorium Campaign at PO Box 13727, New Orleans, La. 70885.

God Bless You.

*Ronald W. Clark Jr.
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Precious Blood

Yea do I walk thru the shadow
of the valley of death,
I shall hold on to Christ
and the blood he left.
I shall fear no evil,
I shall fear no man
For, Christ shall walk with me
hand in hand,
Guiding me over
to the promise land.
For it's thru his precious,
precious blood,
that my spiritual life
began to bud.

So, yea do I walk thru the shadow
of the valley of death,
I shall hold on to Christ
and the blood he left.

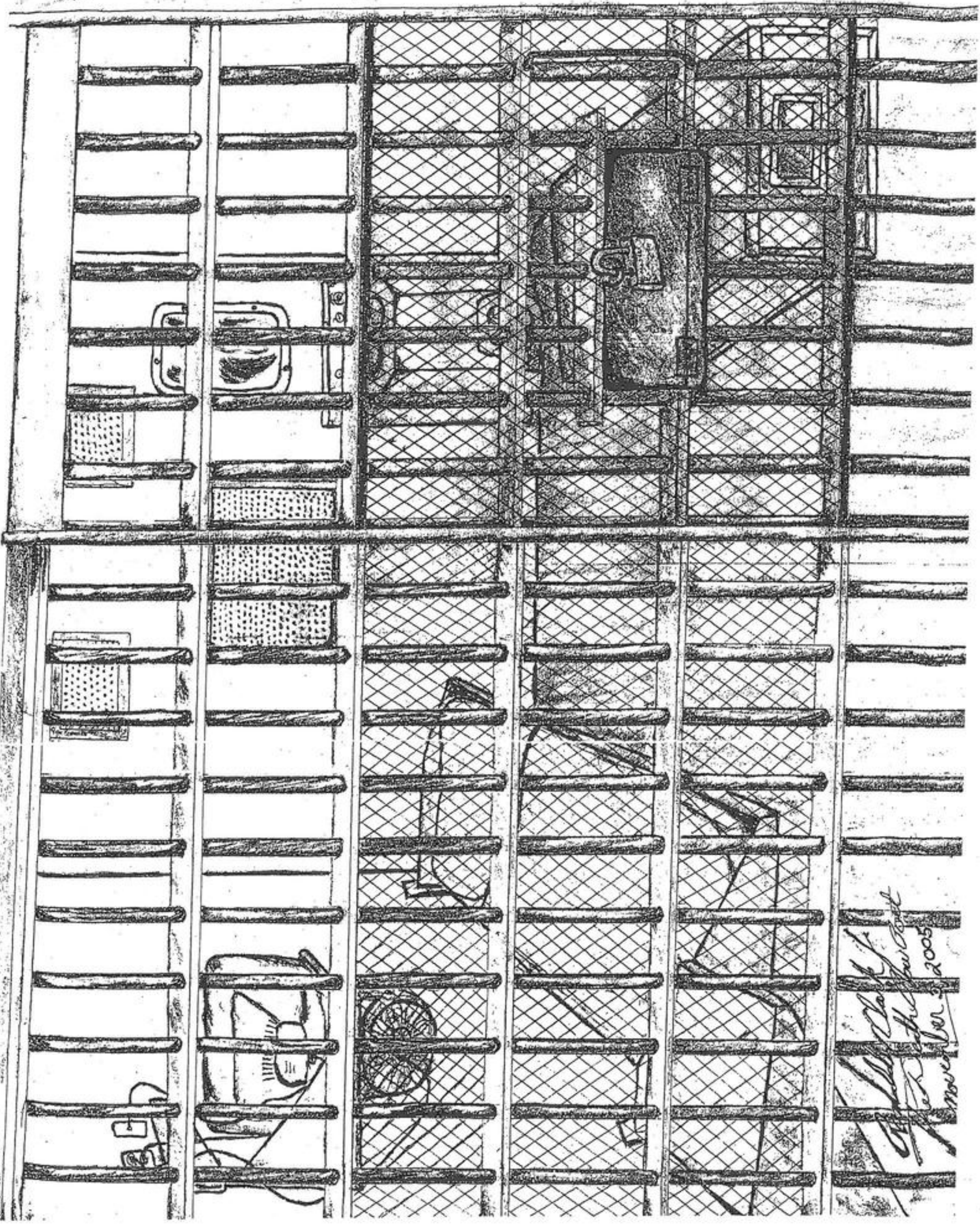


His Son

Well I have a story that I'd like to share
So gather round, and don't despair
For, see there is a God, a God above
And I just want to share, share his love.

Now you may ask just how I know,
And that's what I'm about to show.
For, see this was all God's inspiration,
Genesis through Revelation's.
Yet Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Is about His one and only Son,
Who came upon this old earth
By a virgin mother who gave birth.
And at the tender age of thirty three
He gave his life for both you and me.
He hung upon an old wooden cross
And the people surely felt the loss.
But in three day's he would rise,
And be seen by many eye's.

Now if we take a look at the Book of Acts,
We'll see so many, so many fact's.
About a man, a man named Saul,
Who would later become the Apostle Paul
And preach the word's of Jesus Christ
That he paid the ultimate, ultimate price
For all of man, mankind's sin,
And baby that's where the love, the love begins.



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