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### **Is Not Capital Punishment a Violation of the New Testament Commandment to Love One Another?**

The character of God never changes. It is a false concept that in the Old Testament God is revealed as a vengeful God, but in the New Testament, as a God of love. The righteousness and love of God are expressed in different ways at different times, but His nature does not change. Both characteristics were always part of His nature and being.

We must distinguish between God's instructions to individuals in their personal relationships and His instructions concerning human government for the preservation of an ordered society in a world of sin. When man was governed by conscience alone, before the flood, we read that violence and corruption filled the earth (Gen 6). God brought the flood upon men as a judgment, preserving Noah and his family. After the flood God ordained human government as a bolster for man's conscience, and His command was, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen 9:6).

The New Testament does not nullify this. In Romans 13 we read that the representative of human government is "God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (v.4). The same verse states, "He does not bear the sword in vain." A sword is not used for writing traffic tickets. It is spearing of executing judgment of evildoers, and we believe this includes capital punishment, where this is indicated by the nature of the crime committed.

In our personal dealings one with another we are to practice love and forbearance, but to act in this way toward criminals, and especially murderers, would soon result in a disordered and violent anxiety. While sociologists often proclaim the opposite, crime statistics show an alarming increase of violent crimes where just penalties are not executed upon criminals

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