

Is Punishing Evildoers Unloving?

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It is not uncommon to hear Americans (and others) verbalize contempt for corporal or capital punishment (cf. Delgado, 2008). Supposedly, “**Loving** parents wouldn’t strike their children” (for disciplinary purposes). “Christians can’t logically be pro-life **and** pro-capital punishment.” “The Bible says to repay no one evil for evil.” Modernists utter these and similar phrases frequently in hopes of doing away with all forms of corporal and capital punishment. Make a child stand in the corner, give a student detention, lock a murderer up for life with three square meals a day, air conditioning, cable television, etc., but **never** physically harm or kill a person for his or her unauthorized actions.

What does the Bible say about love and the physical punishment of evildoers? First, God is innately and infinitely good and loving (Mark 10:18; 1 John 4:8). Yet, from killing untold thousands (or millions) of wicked individuals during the Flood (Genesis 6-8) to striking Ananias and Sapphira dead for lying just after the establishment of the church (Acts 5:1-11), God repeatedly has punished evildoers physically.

Second, God warned Adam of the death sentence before sin ever entered the world (Genesis 2:17; cf. Lyons, 2002). After Adam disobeyed God, He drove him from the garden and the tree of life “lest he...live forever” (Genesis 3:22-24). Thus, man not only separated himself spiritually from God when he sinned in the Garden, experiencing spiritual death for the first time (cf. Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1), man was also sentenced to die physically.

Third, long before the commencement of the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, God’s universal law for mankind included capital punishment. God directed Noah and his sons, saying, “Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man” (Genesis 9:6). The same God Who sentenced mankind, save eight souls, to death for wickedness one year earlier, commanded man to put murderers to death. Of all the regulations God could have revealed to man in Genesis 1-11 (from the time of Adam to Abraham), He chose to include the law to put murderers to death.

Fourth, further proof that loving-kindness and corporal or capital punishment are not

antithetical comes from the Law of Moses. God commanded the Israelites, saying,

You shall not hate your brother in your heart....
You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself....
And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself (Leviticus 19:17-18,33-34; cf. Romans 13:9).

The faithful Jew was expected, as are Christians, to “not resist an evil person” (Matthew 5:39) but rather “go the extra mile” (Matthew 5:41) and “turn the other cheek” (Matthew 5:39). “Love,” after all, “is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10; cf. Matthew 22:36-40). Interestingly, however, the Israelite was commanded to punish (even kill) lawbreakers. Just five chapters after commanding the Israelite to “not take vengeance,” but “love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18), God said:

Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and **let all the congregation stone him**. Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. **All the congregation shall certainly stone him**, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death. **Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death**. Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, animal for animal. If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him. And whoever kills an animal shall restore it; but **whoever kills a man shall be put to death**. You shall have the same law for the stranger and for one from your own country; for I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 24:13-22, emp. added).

A faithful Israelite was commanded (and thus expected) to be loving, kind, and non-vengeful, while at the same time be a punisher of evildoers, including both corporal and capital punishment. Similarly, God commanded Christians to “not avenge yourselves” (Romans 12:19), but rather “overcome evil with good” (12:21)

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and “love your neighbor as yourself” (13:9). Yet, fathers are commanded to bring their children up “in the **chastening** and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, ASV, emp. added). What’s more, Paul wrote that “governing authorities” are God’s servants for good, yet they also “bear the sword” and “execute wrath on him who practices evil” (Romans 13:1-4).

Although the politically correct continue to protest the physical punishment of evildoers, based upon their **feelings** that such is unkind, unloving, inhumane, etc., **Scripture** is abundantly clear on the subject. God has indicated that individuals can be loving, kind, considerate, evangelistic, non-vengeful, etc.,

and yet still expect the authorities to punish evildoers physically.

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Dinosaur Art and Imaginary Creatures

Numerous artifacts from ancient civilizations depict creatures that perfectly match our modern-day descriptions of dinosaurs (see Butt and Lyons, 2008). Those who insist that dinosaurs and humans did not live together, however, claim that the animals illustrated in ancient art that look like dinosaurs are imaginary creatures that have no basis in reality. These people suggest that since we know carvings of imaginary gods, minotaurs, mermaids, and aliens have no basis in reality, neither should we think that dinosaur-like creatures do—regardless of how much they look like dinosaurs. John Clayton wrote:

Finding an ancient picture of a dragon, minotaur, or alien-looking creature and assuming it is in reality what people saw is an **incredibly ignorant thing to do**. This applies to creationists who try to maintain people of 4,000 years cavorted with dinosaurs, but also to atheists who attempt to explain the origin of life by claiming aliens seeded the planet with DNA packets. There is no evidence for either of these proposals, and neither of them has any historical support” (2007, 34[4]:4, emp. added).

A major problem arises, however, when those such as Clayton attempt to lump “dragons” in with other creatures such as minotaurs or aliens. No physical evidence is available to verify the existence of minotaurs. Furthermore, the laws of biology preclude even the possibility of such. We do not believe the ancients saw minotaurs **because we do not believe there ever were minotaurs**.

The situation with creatures that look like dinosaurs is much different. Everyone involved

in the discussion believes that huge reptiles once roamed the Earth. The question is not, “Did huge reptilian creatures, that match the ancient carvings, exist?” The question is, “Did they exist **with humans?**” Dinosaurs are not imaginary creatures dismissed by reputable sources. Their bones have been found, fossilized nests uncovered, and their skin impressions studied. Millions of dollars every year pour into dinosaur research. If thousands of minotaur fossils had been found, some of them very close to the carvings that depict creatures that looked just like minotaurs, then minotaurs could not be dismissed as imaginary creatures, and the carvings and drawings could not be dismissed as depictions of imaginary creatures. The difference between art depicting minotaurs and art showing dinosaur-like creatures is that everyone knows dinosaurs existed—that is not up for debate.

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