

You Shall not Murder, Part 2

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[0 : 00] Exodus chapter 20 with the Ten Commandments. By the way, just a happy Memorial Day weekend to everyone.

! It's a time where we remember those who laid down their lives for our country.! Many of us know people, sometimes in our own families, who have lost their lives.

And our family, my dad's uncle, of course this is before he was born, passed away during World War II. We actually had the opportunity years ago, and we lived in Germany.

My dad was stationed in Germany, and we got the opportunity to go visit his gravesite out in France. They have a huge cemetery of American soldiers who lost their lives during World War II. Okay, so we are starting again. We're doing another message.

We're doing a series here on the Ten Commandments. And we're going to do a second message here on the Sixth Commandment. A short one, very brief. You shall not murder.

[1 : 11] As we do every week, I want to help us, you know, kind of set our perspective on how we should approach the law, the Ten Commandments specifically, but the law of Moses in general in the Old Testament.

And with just two important perspectives. One is that we are not under the law as Christians. That will be maybe a little bit confusing this morning as we look at something that seems to be very applicable to everybody, not just Christians.

But the Bible says for Christians that we are under grace and not under the law. What does that mean? Does that mean that the law doesn't apply to us in any way? Does it mean that we can just ignore the law?

Does it mean that we should just ignore the Old Testament and everything in it? No, it just means that the law no longer has power to condemn us. That when we are in Christ, when we put our faith and trust in Jesus, that we come under God's grace.

That we become righteous. God declares us as righteous. Regardless of the things that we have done in the past and even the things that we might do even in the future. So we're not under the condemning power of the law.

[2 : 26] It no longer has the power to separate us from God. As it did in the past. The other thing is that the law is good. If it is used lawfully. And so the law is good.

It's a guide to righteousness. To righteous living. To right and wrong. To morality. And it can help us to set boundaries. Proper boundaries.

To avoid sin in our lives. And really also crimes in society. Which we'll be looking at today. So we shouldn't ignore or diminish the law.

But we need to make sure that we have the right perspective as Christians. On how we relate to it. So again this morning we are in Exodus chapter 20. Going through the Ten Commandments. We're on the Sixth Commandment. And read with me if you will. Verse 13. And it says this. You shall not murder. That's it.

[3 : 21] Very short. Four words in English as I mentioned last week. It's just two words in the Hebrew. Basically it just says don't murder. That's it. Very short.

Very sweet. But it does. Because it's such an important command. Because it provides a foundation. For really two things is what I talked about last week. And last week we talked about the first foundation.

And that first foundation is providing a foundation for human rights. And specifically for the right to life. Which is actually the most important. Many have observed that the right to life is the most important of all human rights.

And so we talked about that last week. The right to life. It's actually a fairly unique kind of Judeo-Christian principle. Human rights.

The right to life. Which is a universal right. We have in our own Declaration of Independence in this country. By the way we're celebrating that Declaration of Independence here.

[4 : 21] 250 years in July. But it says in that Declaration that we hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights.

Rights that you cannot just take away. They're something that God instilled. It's because we were created in his image is the reason why human beings have that right. And then among these are the right to life, liberty, and it says the pursuit of happiness.

Some people have quibbled about that last one. But those two first rights, the right to life and the right to property, are two things found directly in these Ten Commandments.

And so last week we talked about the foundation that this provides for the right to life. Today we're going to talk about another foundation. Of course very closely related.

But the foundation of providing the world with a criminal justice system or a criminal justice code. And we're going to be looking at this commandment as providing the foundation.

[5 : 24] You know, it seems that there is not a day that goes by that there's some story in the news about some innocent person that lost their life.

Their life was cut short. By sometimes it's a violent criminal that was released by some sympathetic judge.

Or just some everyday thug that had a blatant disregard for human life. And because of that, somebody's life ended early.

And it seems that more and more every day, I don't know if any of you kind of feel the same way. But it seems like our justice system is getting more and more lax. That more and more people are emboldened to flagrantly disregard human life in their own lives.

And you know, this is something that the Bible speaks to. There's something in all of us. This kind of outrage when we see something like that on the news. Like, where is the justice in the world?

[6 : 32] How come there's so much crime? How come there's so much murder and bloodshed?

And really, when you look at the nations of the world overall, relatively, America is not nearly as bad as so many of the other countries in the world.

Where violence and bloodshed happen so much more often than they do even here. But the Bible is not silent on these things.

And the Bible speaks to kind of the moral feeling, the emotions, the outrage, the desire and the yearning for justice that we all have in our hearts.

It speaks to these things. And this is what we're going to look at this morning. God provided a foundation for justice here in the Ten Commandments and in the Law of Moses.

You know, we've considered how to evaluate the Ten Commandments. When we first started this series, we looked at really three categories that you can use to categorize the Ten Commandments and any of the laws in the Law of Moses.

[7 : 41] And we identified those three categories as moral laws, those that have to do with right and wrong. Ceremonial laws, those that are not really related to right and wrong, but are more just rituals.

Things like the kinds of foods that you can eat, you know, resting on certain days. Things like the ■ combustors, really sometimes how you farm, dietary restrictions, clothes that you can wear.

And those were, the ceremonial laws had to do with, those were types and shadows, the Bible says, that pointed to future things and many times specifically to Jesus Christ and what he would accomplish later for the whole world.

But then the third category that we shared was the category of civil law. Civil law. And that's what we're going to be looking at today.

I think it's probably pretty clear to most people that you shall not murder is not a ceremonial law. It's not just a type and a shadow that points to something future.

[8 : 48] But it's a fundamental matter of right and wrong. But you shall not murder is also not simply a moral concern.

Not something that we just need to abide by as Christians. It is a concern for all of society. You know, not every commandment, not every sin is that way.

Not every commandment in the Ten Commandments is a criminal matter. For example, you shall not covet when we get into that commandment. We'll see that that doesn't have to do with crime, but really sins of the heart.

You can put it this way. Every crime is a sin, right? But not every sin is a crime. You have the larger category of sin and within that, or of, you know, morality.

And within that, in a smaller category, you have matters that relate to civil criminal codes. And that's where the Sixth Commandment here fits in.

[9 : 54] You know, some people might ask, well, this is kind of an odd topic for a church to be talking about, you know, criminal codes and legal matters. But really, this is actually highly practical.

This is where we live our lives, many people, every day. People have had, I'm sure many of you, if I asked you, have you ever had a crime committed against you? Many of you can think of things that have happened, whether it's stolen goods or sometimes things that are even worse.

And how, as Christians, should we approach this topic and these kinds of things? You know, Christians deal with not just as victims of crimes, but sometimes Christians are accused of crimes. Sometimes, falsely. Other times, Christians can become criminals. So what should our ethics be as Christians?

Just some other questions that come to mind when it comes to this topic. Should we as Christians seek punishment for criminals that commit crimes against us?

[11 : 00] You know, Christians are known for their forgiveness. Should Christians, if somebody commits a crime, whether it's stealing their property or murdering a member of their family, is it just the duty of a Christian just to forgive them and not seek any kind of punishment in the civil courts?

Should Christians use lethal force to defend themselves or their loved ones? Is it okay for a believer to defend themselves and even to use lethal force, if necessary, to protect their own lives or those of their loved ones?

And another one, this relates to what we're celebrating this weekend. Again, those war fighters, right, who gave their lives to defend this country. Is it okay for Christians to participate as warriors on the battlefield to defend their own nation?

Even if it's not a Christian nation, even if it's a secular nation or maybe a nation of some other religion, is it okay for Christians to participate in military service?

So hopefully we'll answer those questions to some degree this morning. The first thing I want to look at as we look at this specific verse, and again, it's just two words in Hebrew, is that word murder.

[12 : 27] You know, in the King James, it's actually translated differently. If anybody has a King James Bible, here's what it says. You shall not kill. Well, in English, there's a pretty big difference between kill and murder, isn't there?

Murder is a more nuanced word. It fits under the broader category of killing, but it has within its meaning some kind of culpability where you took the life of an innocent person.

And you know that it's the exact same thing with the Hebrew. The Hebrew has different words for just killing someone in a justified way or maybe even killing an animal, let's say, and then an act that is criminal in nature that we would use the word murder for.

And so really, the better translation, and just about every Bible translator would say this, the better translation is you shall not murder.

And that's an important point, right? Because if the commandment is very literally you shall not kill, then, man, there's going to be a lot of confusion with, as you expand on this, as Moses expands on this, and as we see other parts in the Bible where, well, it talks about times where human beings are actually expected to take the lives of guilty people.

[13 : 52] So let's ask that question. Is it ever okay, is it ever justified to take someone's life? And I think there are three cases in which the Bible actually speaks to this.

The first one is when it comes to criminal punishment. You remember last week, and you can turn there, this is in Genesis chapter 9, so if you've got your Bibles open, turn to Genesis chapter 9 so we can look at this very explicitly.

We looked at this last week right after Moses came off of, or not Moses, Noah and Moses, people get their names mixed up all the time. I can just imagine them in heaven just rolling their eyes.

I think people will be doing that maybe into eternity. But Noah, after he got off the ark with his family, God gave some instruction and some commands.

And this is Genesis chapter 9, verse 5. God told Noah this, Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning. From the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man.

[14 : 59] From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. And he says this, Whoever sheds man's blood by man, his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God he made man.

And so here, in this commandment, this is a foundation again for the right to life. But in here is a punishment. If someone takes innocent life, then God's command to society, to the authorities, is to take that person, that murderer's life, that that man's blood shall be shed, as a punishment, as a consequence for murder.

And this provides for a system of justice. You know, any system of justice requires punishment, consequences.

If you don't have the consequences, if you don't have the punishments, you don't have a justice system. You have just recommendations to people on how to live life.

Laws require punishments. And that's what God put into place. So that's the first exception, is capital punishment.

[16 : 21] God put that in place. We actually see that throughout the law of Moses, not only just with Noah there. The second one is an exception to taking life, taking someone's life, in a matter of self-defense.

You know, in the law of Moses, there are lots of what we call case laws. These are laws that provide a specific situation or scenario. And the idea is that you would take, learn principles from that scenario, and use that and apply it more broadly to apply that principle to your legal system. In Exodus chapter 22, go ahead and turn there. Exodus chapter 22. This is just a couple of chapters past the Ten Commandments. There is a case law regarding cattle thieves, someone who would steal cattle.

And here's how it goes. It says this, if a man, this is verse one, if a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.

There's some restitution there. And by the way, we'll be talking more about this when we get to the commandment, you shall not steal. But then there's this little aside here.

[17 : 42] It says, if the thief is found breaking in and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. But then it says this, but if the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed.

And then it kind of goes on to continue to talk about the restitution. But it has this little aside. You have this cattle thief, and there might be a scenario where somebody is stealing your goods, and there's a conflict that comes into play.

And in certain scenarios, if there's a tussle, and that thief's life is taken, then the person who took his life is not guilty.

But there's another scenario in which that's inverted, in which the person, the property owner who took his life, is guilty of bloodshed.

And really, what is the exception here? What's the factor involved? It says this, if the sun has risen on him, well, what does that mean?

[18 : 50] Well, a lot of people debate about this. You read commentaries, and there's different ideas. But I think, in general, I think if you think about it like this, it's the middle of the night, right?

And somewhat, you hear some glass breaking downstairs. And there is somebody in your house that's not supposed to be there. And you don't know who it is.

And if you are a thief, by the way, you have a pretty good expectation that there are people in the house that you just broke into, right? And so, as the homeowner, you have a reasonable expectation, a reasonable expectation that that person is a dangerous criminal and your life is on the line.

And so, those circumstances matter. But, let's say it's the middle of the day, and somebody comes into your yard, and they grab one of your shovels, one of your tools.

Well, let's say it's a chainsaw, right? Because it's, you know, or a power tool, right? Because those are more important to us. And it's this same kid that has stolen from your yard five other times.

[20 : 06] And he grabs that power tool, and he starts to run off. And you've got your firearm on you, and you're like, that's it. I've had enough. And while he's running off, you shoot him in the back.

Those are two very different scenarios. And that is what's going on here in this case law. Depending on whether the sun is up or down, what you were able to see, or, you know, what the sun had risen on.

What was your information? How much information did you have? Was this just, did you have a reasonable expectation that was just simply a theft? Or was there room for you to really not know what the danger was?

And so, in certain cases, it's justified to take someone's life if you think that your life is on the line. But in other cases, right, if you don't have reason, good reasons, to believe that your life is in danger, then you are not justified just because you're mad that somebody is stealing from you to take their life.

The third, the third circumstance in which it is justified in the Bible to take the lives of others is in war.

[21 : 24] It's specifically a just war. The Bible doesn't speak to this very explicitly or directly, but many people over the years, starting back most famously with Augustine of Hippo back in the 400s, developed what we call today just war theory, in which they, people have looked and looked at the scriptures and put together a series of thoughts and ideas about how war can and should be, should be done justly and can be done justly, both on how wars can or should be started or, and really, it comes down to, a lot of times, self-defense.

We won't get into all the details of just war theory, but it's something, you know, you see war in the Bible. God sometimes commands war and there are times when nations need to defend themselves and that, again, is part of a criminal justice system.

Criminals aren't just the ones inside your nation. Sometimes the criminals are the ones outside your nation. They're trying to take the lives or take away the liberties of your own, of your own citizens. Some other kind of principles when it comes to this, this matter of a criminal justice code is equitable punishment, proportional punishment.

In Exodus chapter 21, we're still here in these, in Exodus here, right after the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 21, it's talking about a situation actually with a pregnant woman and there's some violence between some men and a woman is harmed and the baby is actually killed.

[23 : 18] And there's this verse that says this, Exodus 21, verse 23, but if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, and stripe for stripe.

Many of us have heard the phrase, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. That's typically how that phrase is quoted. And so the idea is if there's some kind of violent tussle and somebody's life ends because of that, then the punishment is to take that person's life.

But if somebody is just, maybe they lose an eye, right? Well, the punishment is, well, we're going to take, as the justice system, we're going to take your eye as well because of the damage that you did to your neighbor.

but we're not going to take your life because you stole something or maybe you left a scar on somebody's right arm.

The Bible, you know, looks to proportional punishment. Really, there are just three punishments that are laid out in the Bible.

[24 : 46] One is capital punishment for crimes like murder. The other is restitution for crimes like stealing. And then the other one is actual corporal punishment where somebody gets a flogging or something like that, usually for violent crimes that do not end in death.

Gandhi famously said, and he was really, I think, trying to undermine the Bible and Christianity, I guess Judaism and Christianity because this is in the Old Testament.

He said, an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. And you can kind of see how, you know, that sounds right and sounds good because you don't want people to just constantly be going after retribution, right, for things that are done against them.

But this eye for an eye doesn't have to do with just personal vengeance. It has to do with a criminal justice system. And it's about proportionality. Really, it's protecting people.

The eye for an eye idea is protecting people from the government going too far in punishing you for something that is outside of what is proportional.

[26 : 03] The next principle is that God did not allow judges or rulers to pity or to have mercy on criminals.

In Deuteronomy 19, verse 13, the law says, Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel that it may go well with you.

Judges are not allowed to just show mercy. Oh, you know, this is your first crime. You haven't murdered anybody before, so we're just going to give you a little community service and then we'll let you go.

We see a lot of that kind of thing today, don't we? In Numbers, chapter 35, verse 31, God says, Moreover, you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

Don't take any ransom, any money of any kind, or what we call a ransom today, which we have something called a plea bargain or a plea deal.

[27 : 16] And a lot of times, you know, you have prosecutors and their plate is full, they got so many cases, and so they're going to say, Hey, if you'll just say that you're guilty, we can get this trial over with, I got so many other things to do.

Or maybe, Hey, I've got this other bigger criminal that I want to go after, and if you'll just, Hey, do these few things, Hey, we'll lower the criminal penalties for you, and that'll help us with some of our other cases.

Do you know that God does not allow that at all? That's called taking a ransom, whether it's for the life of a murderer or some other crime.

God demands that criminals be punished for the things that they do. In Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 28, whoever the author of Hebrews is, says this, Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

And Paul, or not Paul, but the author of Hebrews says that because that was what was required in the law. Mercy was not allowed. And what we find today in our modern culture is that there's a lot of times, it seems anyway, that there is more mercy and compassion given to the criminals than to the innocent, than to the victims.

[28 : 39] And it's really, that kind of misplaced compassion, by the way, is really at the very heart of kind of the leftist ideology that we see so much today.

There's a book, by the way, by Allie Beth Stuckey, if any of you have heard of her, called Toxic Empathy, and it speaks to that whole idea. Adam Smith, who's famous for writing the book called The Wealth of Nations, he was an economist and a philosopher, he wrote this, this is a quote from him, he said, Mercy to the guilty is cruelty to the innocent.

When you have mercy on criminals, when you let criminals, violent criminals, go with just a slap on the hand, what does that end with? It ends with more crime and more violence among the innocent populace.

Mercy is not without consequence. Many times, mercy leads to more violence and not less in the society. In Ecclesiastes 8, verse 11, Solomon says this, Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore, the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

When we don't see justice, when we don't see people getting consequences for their crimes, it hardens people's heart to do more evil. When someone sees a criminal get away with something, and they think, wow, you know, they did something, maybe they stole something, or, you know, got vengeance against somebody that they didn't like, and say, hey, they got away with it, maybe I can get away with it, too.

[30 : 34] Another thing to talk about when it comes to this commandment, the sixth commandment, a lot of times when we think about murder, we think about murder in the sense of like an Agatha Christie novel, right? Some kind of premeditated thing where somebody is, you know, out to get somebody, maybe they want an inheritance, or they're just mad at someone, they just want vengeance, and so there's this premeditated thing, it involves guns or knives or poisoning somebody, and the Bible specifically speaks to premeditated types of murder.

But do you know it also speaks to other types, you know, not something that we would call murder today, but in legal terms we would call manslaughter. Types of, really, killings that are unintentional, but they are weighed the same as murder.

I think most of these fall into the category of what we would call gross negligence in legal terms.

And there's case law for this as well. In Exodus chapter 21, verse 28, Exodus 21, verse 28, it says this, If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh not be eaten, but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted.

But, if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death.

This is a case where somebody does not have the proper respect for the lives of the people around them. They have an animal, a dangerous animal, that is known for being dangerous.

[32 : 27] It's happened before, the owner knows about it, and instead of keeping his animal properly tied up, he allows it to roam loose, whatever the case may be, and someone's life ends early.

And the Bible says that that person is responsible for the innocent person's bloodshed. Because of this gross negligence, this utter disregard for the lives of people around them.

There's another case law, Deuteronomy 22, verse 8, when you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof. A lot of the ancient homes just had a flat roof, and a lot of people would use the top of their house, right?

When you want to get out of the house, maybe you have a party upstairs. But you would put a parapet around, basically a border. Think about, you know, a fence or some kind of, something to keep people from falling over the edge.

And that's a pretty standard thing to add to any home. So you shall build a parapet for your roof that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.

[33 : 34] He's saying here, hey, if somebody falls from your house because you didn't provide just basic, proper protections, then the guilt of that bloodshed is on you. And there are so many examples of these kinds of things happening in society today.

You think about people who own a dangerous dog. Think about pit bulls, right? And people, you know, those are, I don't know why there's such a love for pit bulls.

And not all pit bulls are dangerous. But sometimes, many of them are very dangerous. And you have one that you know has been aggressive and bitten people in the past.

You don't keep that dog locked up. And it ends up going after and attacking. A lot of times it's a small child. That blood is on your head.

We have examples of people leaving their young children in hot vehicles during the summer. Right? And there have been cases where children have lost their life because of that.

[34 : 37] Well, who's responsible for that? You are on a construction site and there's some heavy machinery and there's some very important safety requirements for how you use that. And you just flagrantly ignore those and somebody dies.

Or maybe you have a loaded firearm in your house and you just leave it open or accessible to young children and there's an accident that happens. Or maybe you're target shooting at your house but there's not a proper backstop and beyond the target is somebody else's home and somebody gets hurt.

That's your responsibility to do that safely. There's also case law when it comes to death that happens during the commission of a lesser crime.

It says this in Exodus chapter 21 verse 18 If men contend with each other and one strikes the other with a stone or with his fist and he does not die but is confined to his bed if he rises again and walks about outside with his staff then he who struck him shall be acquitted he shall only pay for the loss of his time and shall provide for him to be thoroughly healed.

If you get into a fight we hear about bar fights all the time and somebody gets hurt and they go to the hospital well hey it's your responsibility to pay for his medical bills but if that person dies his blood is on your hands you should not have been doing that and so this has a broader application right when you are committing some kind of a lesser crime but somebody dies because of it the number one thing that I think of is drunk driving right people think oh I can get home I'm drunk but I can get home and how many times they didn't make it home safely or maybe they arrived safely but somebody else didn't or maybe there's an armed robbery and hey I'm just going to rob the convenience store I'm going to show the gun I'm not going to actually shoot anybody but whoops something happened somebody got killed their life their blood is on your head or maybe there's somebody they've gotten five tickets from the police and the police stop them and they can't they can't have another one and so they flee and they start to run off they drive off and the police chase them they're just trying to get away from the police but you know what there's a pedestrian that got in the way and they're killed and who's responsible for that you know

[37 : 12] I think even of something maybe even a little bit closer to home I remember as a young person there was somebody in our youth group and he was a little bit older I think he was 18 or something like that and he wanted to take me for a ride in his car and he started driving so crazy I feared for my life and he was just showing off having a good time but that's dangerous right it's against the law it's also dangerous if you're doing something you're seeing how fast your car can go or just doing some kind of reckless driving just for fun and somebody gets or you get into an accident and the passenger in your car dies because of it their blood is on your head these are all things that apply to this commandment of you shall not murder we have an obligation the government authorities those who have civil power have an obligation to make sure that criminals are well as Paul puts it in Romans chapter 13 they're terrorized that they are afraid to commit crimes because of the punishment that will come on their head if they take an innocent person's life I'll finish with this and this is really coming again from a grace perspective as believers in the age of grace does the criminal justice system need to change because we live under grace today as Christians I see people teaching or sometimes just assuming that today but living under grace doesn't mean that we should moderate our criminal justice system God's grace relates to our personal relationship with God it doesn't relate to the civil government God provides us with salvation and a position of righteousness and by the way that applies even to law breakers even to thieves and murderers God's willing to forgive and even make righteous those people but Paul who many call by the way the apostle of grace he's the one that delivered more than anybody else this message of grace both through the Bible and through his ministry he said this in Romans 13 let every soul be subject to the governing authorities for there is no authority except from God and the authorities that exist are appointed by God therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God for those who resist will bring judgment on themselves for rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil do you want to be unafraid of the authority do what is good and you will have praise from the same for he is God's minister to you for good but if you do evil be afraid for he does not bear the sword in vain for he is God's minister an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil and Paul is saying here that includes you Christian even if you do evil things you know I remember years ago there was a case there was a lady she was on death row her name was Carla Faye Tucker this was years ago so many of you may not remember that but she had become a Christian while she was in jail but her death sentence was coming up and there were many people one of the ones that I remember was Pat Robertson he's passed away now and he began to advocate for her clemency trying to get her off of death row because she had become a Christian but you know I think his advocacy for her actually was not good it helped to undermine the criminal justice system because you know becoming a Christian is not a get out of jail free card it may be a get out of hell free card right but when it comes to civil justice Christians are under the same laws that everybody else should be and if you are a criminal of any kind and you're a Christian whether you became one before your crime or after your crime then really you should be willing to submit to the righteous consequences of those crimes and imagine how detrimental it would be to Christianity if that wasn't the case if all you had to do was say hey I'm a Christian now and now you can just you know get let off I mean everybody would become Christians right every criminal would turn to Jesus they would have an amazing conversion and it would all be fake and we have we have enough of that today instead of telling criminals hey if you become a Christian we'll let you off the hook criminally we can tell criminals this you know what Jesus will not save you from earthly justice you're gonna have to pay for the consequences or pay the consequences for your crime in this life but Jesus will save you from eternal justice and you know what God can legally do that because of something that Jesus did 2000 years ago God the son became flesh he lived and he died for you even the criminals not a meaningless death but a purposeful one you know the Bible says the wages of sin is death and because of your sin you have earned death a spiritual death penalty which is separation from God forever but you know what [43 : 10] Jesus took your place the just in place of the unjust the righteous in place of the criminal he suffered the death that you deserved he fulfilled Jesus did the demands of justice so that you can go free if you put your trust in him and his death for your sins you can escape death not the first death necessarily right but that second one and any person regardless of what they've done can join God's family and can be declared by the way completely righteous not in the eyes of the civil

law but in God's economy of spiritual judgment you can be clothed in the righteousness of Christ and why why would God do that why would God do that even for a murderer well here's why here's what it says in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 4 but God who is rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us you know

God loves even murderers and other criminals even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ for by grace you have been saved and he raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the age to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace and his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus some people might say but that's not fair how can God forgive murderers just because they ask just because they say hey I want this offer that God is giving you know there's people who have lived much better lives and they're not even Christians and you know what that's true but you know what God isn't offering eternal life to people who are better that's not what the offer is he is offering a free gift to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ that's what the offer is Ephesians 2 8 says this for by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it's the gift of God not of works not because you were a better person not because you committed less crime not of works lest anyone should boast because God isn't interested in people boasting about how good they are the free gift is available to anyone those who have a clean criminal record and those whose criminal record is full and God doesn't want any boasting he doesn't want if you want to be judged by the way by your own good works then God will oblige he'll do that some people might think they'll fare well

I think they might be sorely disappointed God's not just in the business of saving little sinners but the big ones too you know that the author of most of the New Testament Paul himself was a murderer and he said this about himself about the rest of the world and himself he said this 1st Timothy 115 Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief however for this reason I obtain mercy that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long suffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on him for everlasting life God saved a murderer and a blasphemer and used his example to the rest of the world that God will save anyone so I'll end with this friends are you glad that God offers mercy and grace through Jesus

Christ to anyone that Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of all sinners and if he is willing to save even the chief of all sinners and he's willing to save you and me are you thankful for that amen let's end with a word of prayer father thank you so much for your commitment to justice you know the world is so full of crime you've seen it for thousands of years we don't need to tell you what's in the world but you provided a solution a way you have provided a means for a criminal justice system for those who are willing to implement it we pray that there would be more of an implementation of your criminal justice system in our land but ultimately you also provided a spiritual salvation for each one of us whether we have a criminal record or not even for the chiefest of sinners you are willing to give your life that even the chiefest of sinners could have eternal life and become part of the family of God thank you for doing that for Paul thank you for doing that for every single one of us we're so grateful amen that