

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXV

May 17, 2015

No. 20

## God and Capital Punishment

(Jerry Fite)

If you form your view of capital punishment by starting with God, it is not illogical to be pro -capital punishment. But many in our society do not start with God, for God has no place in how they think about issues. God, the Creator of all, does not even exist as a reality in many of His human creatures. So, human reasoning kicks in against capital punishment.

The jury in Boston, after 14 ½ hours of deliberating, has determined this week that the death sentence is proper punishment for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. He had been found guilty for the terrorist bombing during the 2013 Boston Marathon. Now, he will be punished with death, instead of life in prison without parole.

The jury had on their decision table 17 different charges to determine if the death penalty was appropriate, or do some warrant a life sentence. In the end, they unanimously determined he deserved the death penalty for one of the various considerations. According to the jury, he deserves death for personally placing a bomb in front of the Forum restaurant on Boylston Street that killed 8-year-old Martin Richard and Lingzi Lu, a 23-year-old

Boston University graduate student from China.

Beginning with God, God requires, “*Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made Him man*” (Genesis 9:6). God’s reason for man practicing capital punishment is the guilty one has taken the life of one who was created in the image of God. No animal being killed for food is being considered. Only man is created in God’s image (*cf. Gen. 1:26-27*). Being created in the image of God did not characterize just the first man and woman, but continues today in their offspring. Even today it is illogical to bless God while cursing man “*who is in the image of God*” (James 3:9)

Beginning with God, He authorizes civil government to carry out His vengeance against the one who does evil. “*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*” (Romans 13:4). God is not authorizing an individual taking upon himself to be God’s avenger, but he authorizes government to use the sword to administer punishment for evil deeds. We are not to take

vengeance in our own hands, but leave vengeance in the hands of God. “*Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto the wrath of God: for it is written, Vengeance belongeth unto Me; I will recompense, saith the Lord*” (Romans 12:19). We give place to the wrath of God by allowing government, God’s minister, to administer capital punishment.

Back on April 8, the editorial board of the Boston Globe offered reasons for sparing the life of the convicted bomber. One reason is thinking in terms of the feelings of the guilty: “*Let him rot the rest of his life in jail*” or, as one has reasoned, “*death is just an easy way out*”. Beginning with God, it is not about punishment being easy or hard on the individual, but about the guilty taking the life of one created in the image of God. Another objection against capital punishment is that you are “*substituting vengeance for justice*”. Thinking with God, capital punishment is substituting nothing, but blends God’s vengeance with justice. It is not about making the bomber a martyr, but about a man taking the life of others who are made in God’s image. Thinking with God, the jury has ruled justly.