

Murder Justified?

Johnny Trail - Hillcrest church of Christ - Clarksville, TN

The word of God is very plain about murder. It is a clear violation of God's law for one to murder another human being. While the Bible does make distinctions between capital punishment and killing in self-defense, murdering someone "in cold blood" is sinful. That having been said, we have seen several news cycles that show people who are experiencing "joy" at witnessing the murder of other innocent human beings. Some have even expressed a desire for others to die in assassination attempts and call for the killing of people that they simply disagree with in political, social, and economic philosophies.

Just recently, the chief executive officer (CEO) of United Healthcare, Brian Thompson, was murdered in cold blood. His assassin, Luigi Mangione, shot him in the back of his calf muscle, watched him fall to the pavement, and shot him two more times. As of now, reports say this murder happened because Mangione did not receive the type of health care that he believed he was entitled to after suffering some life-altering injuries. Brian Thompson leaves behind a wife and two sons. People who wrote about Thompson quoted his associates as saying he was "one of the good guys" who wanted to change the healthcare system to help people get better and have more benefits. It is ironic to think Mangione would select this person for assassination.

Certain elements of our society have championed Mangione as some type of hero for murdering the CEO of United Healthcare. Certain female podcasters have expressed a romantic interest in Mangione. On top of these things, some circulars have been produced that show the images of other health care CEOs in color and Brian Thompson's picture in black and white. These circulars have been taken down, but the implication is these other CEOs should be murdered in cold blood. A type of hit list, if you will, encouraging others to follow the example set by Mangione.

Taylor Lorenze, a former reporter for *The Washington Post* and the *New York Times* said that this murder made her feel "joyful" regarding what it stood for as she was interviewed by Piers Morgan. Morgan was rightfully disgusted with her response, and her explanation was equally disturbing. Lorenze said, "The Americans that he murdered...So are the tens of thousands of Americans, innocent Americans who died because greedy health insurance executives like this one push policies of denying care to the most vulnerable people. The many millions of Americans that have watched people that I care about suffer and in some cases die because of lack of healthcare." None of these issues justifies murder or feeling "joy" over such a thing.

To make matters worse, a recent study showed an alarming number of young people who viewed the murder in a favorable light. Forty-one percent of eighteen to twenty-nine-year-old individuals found the murder to be acceptable. Liberal pundits seem to express a degree of understanding for Mangione in various interviews that have been conducted over the last several days since the murder of Thompson. This includes politicians and people in the liberal media. This reasoning adds a new dimension to "cancel culture."

What does it say for the morality of a society that endorses the murder of people with whom they disagree? Are some in our nation so bloodthirsty that they can justify murdering people for just about any reason? There are many people we tend to disagree with in our culture; especially those who teach false doctrines in religious matters. We do not always agree with people who vary with our political views. That having been said, no reasonable, moral human being seeks to kill those with whom he disagrees.

Human life is sacred in the eyes of God. One of the first commandments that is offered to the patriarch Noah, straight off the Ark, is prohibitions and punishment for murder. Genesis 9:6 says, "*Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.*" When Moses was given the Ten Commandments, one prohibition was against murder. Exodus 20:13 says, "*You shall not murder.*" If a person murdered another human being without reasonable justification, they were to be executed under the Law of Moses. Leviticus 24:17 says, "*Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death.*" The life of a human was so valuable in the eyes to God that one guilty of murder forfeited his life as punishment. If God held human life in such high esteem, Christians should too.

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...continued page 3...

Paul speaks about the grace of God and sets forth its true nature in Titus 2:11-12. The gospel has to do with the person of Christ, the Word provided, and the Word proclaimed and received. The one word that best states this is GRACE. Thus, we read of: "*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Rom.16:20). Paul describes it as such: "*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*" (Acts 20:24). Also, he stated: "*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*" (Acts 20:32). Grace, next to God, is perhaps the most important word in the Bible. The root word means "To give pleasure to" and it goes out in the direction of the giver as well as the receiver. The term "Grace" expresses the divine action toward man as a helpless and hopeless sinner. It is not merely "favor," but help. It is not only goodwill, but good work. It is "Divine Attitude" shown by action, the gift of His Son. So often it is the case that many people misunderstand what grace does for them. It covers much more than the fact that God sent His Son to die for the sins of the world; this is included, of course.

True biblical grace is a saving grace. "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men*" (Titus 2:11). Divine forgiveness is not only God's word, but it is also His deed. It comes to us through love that suffered for us, a love that claims us for its own, and one that will restore us to our rightful place with God. To have salvation is to have the power of sin broken in us. The Lord offers us that strength (Rom.6:7-14). Salvation is ours by the grace of God. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*" (Eph.2:8).

Grace is the putting forth of His power for the good of humanity, the motive of which is mercy, born of love. Now notice that Paul also said, "*The grace of God hath appeared*" (Titus 2:11). It had a preexistence (i.e., it dwelt in the mind of God before the beginning, but now it has appeared to all humanity with the coming of Christ).

Remember, God's grace teaches us what we can do and what we cannot do.

True biblical grace is a teaching grace. "*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:12). This is a life-long work, a work that will be concluded when grace ends in glory. The scriptures show us the idea involved. It is "instruction" which aims at the increase of

virtue. But let's look at what it is to teach. From a negative view, it teaches us that we are to, deny, renounce, forsake "ungodliness." Ungodliness is the root sin of the world (Gen.3:1-8).

Furthermore, we are to deny "worldly lusts." These things are of the world. John tells us, "*Love not the world, neither the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*" (1 John 2:15-16).

On a positive note, we are to live soberly, that is, control ourselves. Self-control is holding oneself within due limits as it respects pleasures, duties, and all other things. Christians must live "righteously." That is, they must respect the rights which their fellow man has. Christians must live "godly." That is, faithfully performing their duties to God.

Does this "grace" mean that God will overlook sin? Some today teach that we cannot judge what a salvation issue is and what is not, saying that God may by His grace save some who do not believe as we believe. For example, look at this statement by another writer; "*Surely you don't believe this is a salvation issue and that people who use instruments are going to hell, do you? God is the judge and will decide correctly about all that. I don't know what God will do, but I trust Him to do the right thing. He doesn't need my help. Personally, I don't believe it is a salvation issue if the doctrine of grace is true, and it is. But my opinion is irrelevant.*" The writer is right about one thing; his opinion is irrelevant. Whether we are speaking about the instrumental music issue or the issue related to baptism or what day we are to worship God, etc., God's grace cannot go against what He has already commanded on the matter. The man who wrote these words does not understand God's grace or God's Law. If God has given us a Law by His grace, His grace must work within that Law and not outside of it. If one violates the Law of God, then the grace of God has become of no value for that person. God cannot save one who is not in agreement with His Law. Remember, God's grace teaches us what we can do and what we cannot do. Let's make sure we stay within the boundaries of God's Law.

I have been preaching “full-time” for over 25 years. I have worked in Tennessee, Florida, and Arkansas and at four different congregations in that time. One subject that has needed attention in every place is that of the consumption of alcohol. I saw a statement on Facebook that is very accurate: “*Alcohol is the one drug that you have to defend yourself for NOT using.*” The consumption of alcohol is so common that you are considered abnormal for not partaking.

I do not think anyone would disagree that *drunkenness* is a sin. The Bible is abundantly clear on that issue (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:21; 1 Pet. 4:3). The statistics concerning alcoholism speak for themselves. DUI, public intoxication, aggravated assault, sexual assault, spousal abuse, homicide, child neglect and abuse, property damage. The list could go on and on! Alcohol changes how your body functions. The liver, brain, pancreas, and metabolism are all affected by the use of alcohol in any amount. Alcohol is a depressant that impacts the function of the brain, followed by the function of the central nervous system. Brain activity slows, drowsiness, decreased inhibition, and slowed coordination.

Yet, how many times have we heard a person who claims to be a Christian defend the use of alcohol? Think about the Biblical admonitions to sobriety. “*You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation*” (1 Thes. 5:5-8). Peter wrote, “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober...*” (1 Pet. 1:13). “*Be sober, be vigilant...*” (1 Pet. 5:8). Sobriety has to do with having a clear mind and being free from intoxicants. The consumption of alcohol does exactly the opposite of that! Sarah Sheppard, at www.verywellmind.com wrote, “*Specifically, alcohol acts on the body’s central nervous system. It disrupts the neurotransmitters in your brain that are responsible for transmitting information. This can affect your behaviors, thoughts, and feelings...In other words, it reduces activity in the brain.*” Science and Scripture both speak about the negative impacts of alcohol so definitively! However, you’ll hear someone argue, “*Well, Jesus made wine!*” or “*What about Deuteronomy 14:26?!*”

The effects of alcohol begin with the first drink. A person can consume alcohol quickly, but it takes the body a lot longer to process it. A biomarker can be detected in urine for up to fourteen days after drinking. Alcohol can be detected in the saliva for up to twenty-four hours. It takes approximately sixty to ninety minutes for the body to begin breaking it down. All the while, you are not sober. While you may not be *stumbling drunk*, you certainly are not sober. If the Christian is commanded to be sober - and he is - how is the consumption of alcohol justifiable? Here’s a good question - why would a Christian want to be involved with it at all?

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Consequently, Christians should realize that it is not their right, biblically speaking, to execute revenge upon those who have wronged them. We will be mistreated for our religious views. People will attempt to deal with us unfairly in business dealings. We will feel as if we have been treated poorly in various facets of life. These things do not give us the right to be unilateral judge, jury, and executioner. Romans 12:17-21 says, “*Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy; is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in doing so you will heap coals of fire on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*”

Finally, government authorities are the God-ordained entities tasked with executing judgement upon those who are criminals - not the people of God. Romans 13:1-4 says, “*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, and 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.*”

January/February 2025 Contributors

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Pilot (Mammoth Spring, AR)	\$700.00
Mammoth Spring	\$600.00
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Troy Road (Obion, TN)	\$250.00
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Gordon Barnett (Salem, AR)	\$90.00
Larry Curtis (Sherwood, AR)	\$50.00
Dortha Johnson (West Plains, MO)	\$25.00

Contribution Total **\$4,090.00**

Postage Cost	\$2,479.13
Printing Cost	\$1,945.38
Supplies Cost	\$90.59
Total Cost	\$4,515.10

Difference **\$-425.10**

The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (2 Pet. 1:3)
- Name of Christ (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
- Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
- Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
- Married to Christ (Rom. 7:4)
- Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Jesus the Head of the One Body (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:23)
- Added to the church by God (Acts 2:41, 47)

Salvation

- Saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8-9)
- Not by faith alone (Jas. 2:14-26)
- Not by grace alone (Matt. 7:21)
- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
- Heard, believed, baptized (Acts 18:8)
- Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
- Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)

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