



[Genesis 9:5](#)

(5) And surely the blood of your lives will I require. At the hand of every animal will I require it, and at the hand of man. At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man.

A Faithful Version

Some people vehemently oppose capital punishment for murderers. They view it as nothing more than legalized murder committed by the state and a punishment that has no deterrent effect. But how does [God](#), who should be our final authority, weigh in on this matter? His instruction to Noah, upon leaving the ark following the Flood, covers [Genesis 8:15](#)—[Genesis 9:17](#), part of which involves governments of men: "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. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man" ([Genesis 9:5](#)).

Although man has a moral responsibility to God—"render . . . to God the things that are God's"—we must also give a reckoning to men—"render . . . to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" ([Matthew 22:21](#)). God has thus delegated to human governments certain areas of His authority in which man obeys God through subjection to his fellow men. God instituted human government to regulate the corporate relationship of man to man, and this includes the authority to take life as punishment for crimes involving murder.

One of the highest responsibilities of government is the protection of life. From this commitment to protect the lives of the innocent arises the very serious responsibility of capital punishment. Humans are not only commanded not to murder, but they are also not to avenge murder. That responsibility falls on the state.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Sixth Commandment \(Part One\) \(1997\)](#)

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