



"Only a passionate love of purity can save a man from impurity."  
—William Barclay

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## **Deterrence**

For the past several weeks, the nation has been wringing its collective hands over the pedophilia scandal among Catholic priests. Not only have the dangers and foolishness of the doctrine of priestly celibacy been exposed, but the disgraceful situation has also revealed the absolute bankruptcy of biblical morality and ethics throughout the Catholic hierarchy. It presents the picture of a feeble old man holding his hands out in dismay, saying, "What should I do?"

Like most of mankind, even many "Christians," Catholic theologians threw out the Bible as the basis for their beliefs a long time ago. Tradition and the pontifications of the Popes hold at least as much sway as God's Word, and truth be told, probably more—much more. Thus, looking to the Bible for answers to the current crisis will not be a common action.

In fact, the communiqué released by the American bishops after their meeting with Pope John Paul II bears this out. Though the 81-year-old pontiff told them, "There is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young," says an article on FOXNews.com, "the group of cardinals and top bishops stopped short of developing a zero-tolerance plan to punish abusive priests. The American church leaders said in

cases that are 'not notorious' they would leave it up to the local bishop to decide if such a priest is a threat to children and should be defrocked."

Of course, the seventh commandment—"You shall not commit adultery" ([Exodus 20:14](#))—covers the perversion of pedophilia, as it also covers homosexuality, the unmentioned other half of this equation (see [Leviticus 18:22](#); [Romans 1:27](#)). Though the Bible does not specifically say, "You shall not uncover the nakedness of a child," the underlying assumption is that this would be universally known to be evil. In any case, sexual relations with a minor outside of marriage would be fornication, a [sin](#) covered in numerous verses.

What is the proper biblical penalty for pedophilia? As mentioned, pedophilia is not found in the Bible, but the instructions concerning fornication and homosexuality can give us guidance. Notice [Leviticus 20:13](#): "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them." The penalty for fornication varied according to the situation. In a case of rape—in which the woman's cries for help could not be heard—only the man was put to death (see [Deuteronomy 22:25-27](#)). By combining these two penalties, the child-molester would be put to death, while his traumatized victim would not be punished.

Of course, this solution would never be used in our modern, therapeutic, humanistic society. Even though our good and just Creator [God](#) gave these laws to regulate behavior among carnal people, the "wise" and politically correct people of today think of such a penalty as harsh, barbaric, and cruel.

Yet, how else can human society deter further criminal and sinful behavior? The penal law God gave to Israel—based on the "eye-for-an-eye" principle ([Exodus 21:23-25](#)), that is, punishment to fit the crime—had four primary characteristics that our system lacks. To produce deterrence, punishments were:

1. applied equally to all people: rich, poor, high, low, Israelite, or Gentile (see [Exodus 12:49](#)).
2. executed publicly as an example to the community (see [Leviticus 24:13](#); [Deuteronomy 21:21](#)).

3. generally "brutal" to teach the serious effect of sin (see [Deuteronomy 13:11](#); [20:16-18](#)).
4. executed swiftly to link crime to punishment (see [Ecclesiastes 8:11](#)).

Today's sentences vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and sometimes trial to trial; occur out of the public eye, usually in a prison; lack teeth, so much so that in some cases inmates prefer prison life to life on the outside; and descend on the criminal months or years after his crime. Little in the modern system commends itself to true justice or the betterment of humanity.

If we desire a little bit of hope, it is good in these days of continuing decline—what judge Robert Bork called "slouching toward Gomorrah"—to remember the words of [Amos 5:15](#): "Hate evil, [love](#) good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph." The bad news is that this ray of hope shines through only after a great storm of grief and destruction—God's justice—that looks imminent. The good news is that, after that, [Jesus Christ](#) will establish His truly just government on the earth to rule for all eternity ([Isaiah 11:1-5](#))!

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Sin \(Part One\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Human nature plays a leading role in the fatal attraction to sin. Though relatively neutral at its inception, human nature is subject to a deadly magnetic pull toward self-centeredness, deceit, and sin (Jeremiah 17:9). By the time God calls us, we are hopelessly ensnared and enslaved by sin. To counteract this deadly pull, we must imitate Christ's standard of active righteousness (going about doing good) as opposed to the Pharisee's more passive righteousness (a meticulous, reactive avoidance of evil). The sins of omission (the majority of our sins), neglect, and ignorance have the tendency to dissolve when we practice Christ's standard of active righteousness.

## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[The Seventh Commandment \(1997\)](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

For the past 40 years sexual sins have topped the list of social issues in America. Divorce is at an all-time high. John Ritenbaugh examines the seventh commandment, the penalties paid for breaking it and how to become faithful to God in the keeping of it.

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