

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD LAWS & PUNISHMENTS

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THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD

Government is understood to be the governing of subjects. The Moral Government of God is the governing of God, in the realm of morality, over moral agents who are subjects in this Government. The Bible describes God as a Governor (Matt. 2:6) who is the Sovereign of a Government (Isa. 9:6-7). The Scriptures also describes God as a King (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; Rev. 19:16) who is over a Kingdom (Ps. 45:6; Dan. 6:26; Heb. 1:8; Rev. 12:10). These different expressions of a King with a Kingdom or a Governor with Government are descriptions of the same concept. King and Kingdom relates to God's rule or reigning, just as Governor and Government relates to God's rule or reigning. The Kingdom of God is internal (Lk. 17:21) and relates to righteousness or morality (Matt. 6:33; Rom. 14:17).

Government consists in laws, courts, judges, punishments, prisons, and rewards. The Moral Government of God has the Law of Love (Deut. 6:5; Deut. 10:12; Matt. 22:35-40; Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 13:8; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14; Jas. 2:8), the court of Judgment Day (Matt. 12:36; 2 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 3:7; Jude 1:6), the Judge of Jesus Christ (Gen. 18:25; Jn. 5:22; Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1), the everlasting punishment of eternal death or endless hell fire (Matt. 25:46; Rom. 6:23; 2 Thes. 1:9; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 1:7), the prison of the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10; Rev. 20:14-15; Rev. 21:8), and rewards (Matt. 5:12; Matt. 6:4; Matt. 10:41; Matt. 16:27; Lk. 6:23; Lk. 6:35; 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Cor. 3:14; Col. 3:24; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Jn. 1:8; Rev. 11:18; Rev. 22:12). God righteously judges and governs all of the earth (Ps. 67:4).

God is the author of our nature, that is, God is the author of our constitution (Isa. 49:5; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13-14; Ecc. 7:29), so He forms each of us in the womb in His image (Gen. 1:26-27, 9:6). Therefore we are all created with a free will and a conscience, created capable of good or evil. Since God created us capable of moral action, capable of forming moral character, we are subjects of His Moral Government, intended to be governed by Him. The word nature can be used to describe a man's God given constitution (Rom 1:31, 2:14, 2:27; 2 Tim 3:3) or the word nature can mean a man's chosen character, custom, habit, or manner of life (Jer. 13:23; Acts 26:4; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:2-3; Gal 2:15; 2 Tim 3:10; 2 Pet 1:4). While God is the author of our constitution, each man is the author or self-originator of their moral character (Ecc. 7:29; Matt. 12:34-35, 15:19; Mk. 7:21-22; Lk. 6:45).

Within the Moral Government of God, all men are held accountable according to their knowledge, no more or less (Matt. 10:15, Matt. 11:21-22, Matt. 11:24, Matt. 23:14, Mk. 6:11, Mk. 12:40, Lk. 10:12, Lk. 10:14, Lk. 12:47-48, Lk. 20:47, Lk. 23:34, Jn. 9:41, Jn. 15:22, Jn. 19:11, Rom. 1:18-20, Rom. 4:15, Rom. 5:13, Jas. 4:17, Jas. 3:1, Heb.

10:26, 2 Pet. 2:21). The extent of man's moral obligation is the extent of man's moral ability, no more or less (Deut. 6:5, Deut. 10:12, Deut. 30:6, Matt. 22:37, Mk. 12:30, Lk. 10:27, 1 Cor. 10:13). However large or small your ability is, you must love God with all of it. So God's Laws are not impossible (1 Jn. 5:3) but are reasonable and good (Rom. 7:12, 7:16; 1 Tim. 1:8).

Moral perfection is a moral obligation for all men (Gen. 17:1; Deut. 18:13; 1 Chron. 28:9; 2 Chron. 19:9; Isa. 1:16; Matt. 5:48; Jn. 5:14, 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Tim. 5:7, Rev. 3:2). Moral perfection is not perfection of knowledge, since that is impossible and therefore cannot be an obligation, but moral perfection is purity of heart or motive (Matt. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:22) which is perfection of heart or intention (1 Kg. 8:61, 11:4, 15:3, 15:14; 2 Kg. 20:3; 1 Chron. 12:38, 28:9, 29:9, 29:19; 2 Chron. 15:17, 16:9, 19:9, 25:2, Ps. 101:2; Isa. 38:3). Moral perfection is having a clean conscience void of offense (Acts 23:1, 24:16). Moral perfection is defined as loving God and loving your neighbor (Rom. 13:8; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14; 1 Thes. 3:12-13; Jas. 2:8). Moral perfection is a choice (1 Kg. 8:61; Ps. 101:2). While physical perfection (glorification) is not attainable in this life (1 Cor. 15:50-56; Php. 3:11-12), moral perfection (sanctification) is attainable in this life (1 Kg. 15:14; 2 Kg. 20:3; 2 Chron. 15:17; 2 Chron. 16:9; Job 1:1, 1:8, 2:3; Isa. 38:3; Lk. 1:6; Jn. 8:34-36; Acts 20:32, 23:1, 24:16, 26:18; Rom. 6:6, 6:18, 6:22; 1 Cor. 1:2, 1:8, 6:11; Heb. 2:11, 10:10, 10:14; Gal. 5:24; Php. 2:15, 3:15; 1 Thes. 3:12-14, 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:2, 3:10; Tit. 1:6-7, 2:12; 2 Pet. 3:14; Jude 1:1). Though no man is above temptation, not even Jesus (Matt. 4:1; Mk. 1:13 Heb. 4:15), sin or disobedience to God's moral Law is always voluntary, optional, and avoidable (Gen. 4:6-7, Deut. 8:2, Jdg. 2:20-22, Ex. 33:2, 34:24; Eze. 3:19, 12:13, 33:19; Jer. 18:8-10; Ps. 81:13, 1 Cor. 10:13).

In God's Moral Government, morality is of the inward intention of the heart (Gen. 6:5; Joel 2:12-13; Matt. 5:8, 6:1-5, 12:35, 15:11, 15:17-20, 23:25-28; Mk. 7:15-23; Lk. 10:27; Heb. 4:12; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Tim. 1:5; Titus 1:15). All sin or righteousness comes out of the heart (Isa. 14:13-14; Eze. 11:21; Matt. 5:28, 12:35, 15:18-19; Lk. 6:45; Rom. 6:17, 10:10; 2 Pet. 2:14). God judges the heart (1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 24:12), because a person's moral character is their intention or heart (Prov. 23:7; Matt. 5:28; Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:29; 1 Jn. 3:15). Love is the essence of all virtue. (Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:37-40, Mk. 12:30-31, Lk. 10:27, Rom. 13:8, Rom. 13:10, Gal. 5:14, Jas. 2:8). There is no virtue at all without love. (1 Cor. 13:1-3). To have outward acts of righteousness, without an inward heart of righteousness, is to have no righteousness at all (Matt. 5:20, 7:15, 23:28; Lk. 11:39). A person is holy or sinful, obedient or disobedient, but never both at the same time, because they only have one heart (Matt. 6:22-24, 12:33; Lk. 11:34-36; 2 Cor. 5:17; Jas. 3:11-12).

All sin consists in sinning, sin is a choice to transgress known Law (Rom. 5:13; Jas. 4:17; 1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is entirely an unreasonable and unintelligence choice (Ecc. 9:3, Matt. 7:26) to rebel against the reigning of God (Lk. 19:14), an attempt to dethrone God and establish yourself as the center of the universe (Isa. 14:13-14). The essence of sin is a selfish rebellious heart (Isa. 14:13-14; Lk. 19:14). Sin is a selfish motive of the will (Matt. 23:5), a state of the inner heart (Matt. 5:28, 15:18:19), which manifests itself into outward action and conduct. (Matt. 12:33, 12:35) This inward sin, the inward motive of

the heart, is completely voluntary. (Job 11:14, Matt. 23:26, Rom. 6:12) A man determines the condition of his own heart (1 Ki. 8:61; Zec. 7:10; Eze. 18:31; Ps. 119:112) All sin is either against the person of God (Ex. 10:16, 20:3-11; Deut. 1:41; Deut. 9:16; Josh. 7:20; Jdg. 10:10, 2 Kg. 17:7, Jer. 3:25, Jer. 8:14, Lk. 10:27) against the person of your neighbor (Ex. 10:16, 20:12-17; 2 Chron. 6:22; Lk. 10:27), or against the person of yourself (1 Cor. 6:18). But all sin is rebellion against the Law or Government of God (Lev. 4:22, Dan. 9:11, 1 John 3:4).

Having a holy, loving people which glorify Him and love each other was God's original intention for His creation (Gen 6:5-6, Eph 1:4, Eph 2:10), so this is the end sought by His government (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Pet. 1:22). Love obeys the Law (Jn, 14:15, 14:23; 1 Jn. 5:2, 5:3), because love is the Law (Deut. 6:5, Matt. 22:37-40; Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 10:27), love is the fulfillment of the entire Law (Rom. 13:8; 13:10; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8) Love is an inner motive of the heart, a committal of the will, to promote the highest well-being of all (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37-40; Mk. 12:30-31; Jn. 3:16, 15:13; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 13:8; Rom. 13:10; Gal. 5:14; Jas.2:8), which of necessity manifests itself into outward action. (Matt. 7:17, 12:35; Lk. 6:45; Rom. 11:16; Tit. 1:15) Being holy, or loving, is a voluntary choice. (Rom. 6:19; 2 Cor. 7:1) Love is an intelligent choice to live according to your reason or in submission to the demands of your conscience (Isa. 1:18; Matt 7:24; Lk. 15:17; Rom. 12:1; Jas. 3:13). Love is the moral state God chooses to live in. (Jn. 3:16, 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:8, 4:16). Love is the moral state, or holiness is the moral quality, of all those who follow Jesus (Mk. 6:20; Lk. 1:70; Acts 3:21; 1 Thes. 5:27; 1 Cor. 3:17; Eph. 2:21, 2:22, 3:5; Col. 3:12; 1 Thes. 2:8; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 3:1; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Jn. 2:3, 2:4, 3:3, 3:24, 4:7, 5:2-3).

The punishment of God is rightly executed upon willful rebellion (1 Sam. 3:13; Prov. 1:24-26; Hos. 9:9; Matt. 22:27; Lk. 10:27; Acts 3:23; Rom. 2:14-16; Heb 10:26-31; Eph. 5:6). Sin and guilt are not hereditary (Deut. 24:16; 2 Ki. 14:6; 2 Chron. 25:4; Eze. 18:2-4; Eze. 18:19-20; Jer. 31:29-30). Each man originates their own sin, each man is the author of their own moral character (Ecc. 7:29; Matt. 12:34-35, 15:19; Mk. 7:21-22; Lk. 6:45). Men are dead in sins, that is, they are separated from God and have a dead relationship, because they have each voluntarily chosen to sin (Isa. 59:2, Lk. 15:24; Rom. 5:12, Rom. 5:14, Rom. 7:9, Rom. 7:11, Col. 2:13). Men responsible for making themselves sinners (Gen. 6:12, Exo. 32:7, Deut. 9:12, Deut. 32:5, 1 Sam. 3:13; Jdg. 2:19, Hos. 9:9, Ps. 14:2-3, Isa. 53:6, Ecc. 7:29, Zep. 3:7, Rom. 3:23). Men are responsible for their own condemnation (Rom. 2:5; Heb. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:13), sinners are accountable for their own sin (Deut. 24:16, 2 Kg. 14:6, 2 Chron. 25:4, Eze. 18:2-4, Eze. 18:19-20, Matt. 16:27, 2 Cor. 5:10, 2 Cor. 11:15, 1 Pet. 1:17, Rev. 22:12).

Under the Moral Government of God there are morally loyal citizens (Rom. 15:18; 2 Cor. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:14; 1 Jn. 3:22, 4:17) and morally rebellious citizens (Isa. 14:13-14, 30:9, 30:15-16, 31:6, 42:24; Neh. 9:29; Lk.19:14, 19:27). The loyal citizens are those who obey the Law of God (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 2:3; 1 Jn. 3:22; Rev. 12:17; Rev. 14:12), who allow God to govern their moral actions. Rebels are those who reject the Law of God (Rom. 10:21; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Jn. 3:4), who resist the reigning of God over their moral actions (1 Sam. 8:7; Lk. 19:14), who "despise" the Lord's "government" and are "self-

willed” (2 Pet. 2:10). Christians are those who were formerly disobedient (Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 3:20) but are no longer disobedient (Rom. 6:17; Php. 2:12; 1 Jn. 3:9, 3:22). Christians make the daily choice to obey God (Lk. 9:23; 1 Cor. 15:31). But sinners are unwilling to being governed by God (Isa. 14:13-14, 30:9, 30:15-16, 31:6, 42:24; Neh. 9:29; Lk.19:14, 19:27), they want to govern their own lives (2 Pet. 2:10).

All men are under obligation to the Moral Government of God, under obligation to the moral Law of love (Matt. 22:35-40; Mk. 12:30-31; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 13:8; Rom 13:10; Gal 5:14; Jas. 2:8). No sinner can be justified by obeying the Law since present obedience cannot atone for past disobedience (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:20; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). And though Christians are not under the condemnation of the Law (Rom. 6:14-15, 8:1; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 5:18), nor under obligation to the Jewish laws (Acts 21:25, Gal. 4:21), Christians are under obligation to obey God (Acts 3:19, 5:29; 2 Pet. 3:11) by choosing to be loving (Rom. 13:8); Christians are obligated to walk as Christ walked (Jn. 13:15; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 Jn. 2:6) and thereby fulfill the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). The Law of God is written upon the very heart of the Christian (Ps. 40:8, 51:7, 119:34; Prov. 3:1; Isa. 51:7; Jer. 31:33; Rom. 6:17; Heb. 10:15-16), so that the Kingdom is reigning on the inside of them (Lk. 17:21). The righteous care about the well-being of others but the wicked disregard it (Prov. 29:7). True obedience to God is caring about others (Lk. 6:9), love is a committal of the will to promote the highest well-being of all (Jn. 15:13), love does not promote the ill-being or harm of his neighbor (Rom. 13:10), love is absolutely not selfish (1 Cor. 13:5), and so love is the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 13:8; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8), the one who loves will keep God’s commandments (Jn. 14:15; 1 Jn. 5:2, 5:3; 2 Jn. 1:6).

THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT & THE DESIGN OF LAWS

The purpose of Government is to protect society from harm, to promote the well-being of the community. The design of laws is to protect the subjects from what is detrimental and to promote what is beneficial. Well-being is what is good and ill-being is what is evil (Lk. 16:25).

The purpose of human government is to promote the well-being of the community (Rom. 13:4). The purpose of family government is to promote the well-being of the family (Prov. 13:23, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15). Likewise, the purpose of God’s Government, the design of His Laws, is to promote the highest well-being of all (Deut 5:29; Deut. 6:3; Deut. 6:24; Deut. 10:13; Jer. 7:23; Jer. 32:39; Lk. 6:9; Eph. 6:3), His own glory supremely (Matt. 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 10:27) and the well-being of neighbors equally (Matt. 19:19; Matt. 22:39; Mk. 12:31-33; Lk. 10:27; Rom 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8). That is why the Law is holy, just and good (Rom. 7:14, 16; 1 Tim. 1:8). God’s Law is a light or lamp so that we might see how we ought to live and conduct ourselves as to our chosen path or way of life (Prov. 6:23; Isa. 51:4). God commands love because it promotes the well-being of all, and God forbids sin because it demotes the well-being of all. Love is the commitment of the will to promote the well-being of another (Jn. 15:13; 2 Thes. 3:13) while sin is essentially selfishness (Isa. 14:13-14, Matt. 23:5). God

commands the means (love) which are good because of their relation to an intrinsically good end (well-being) and God forbids the means (sin) which are evil because of their relation to an intrinsically evil end (ill-being). Obeying God's Law results in blessedness or happiness (Ps. 94:12, 112:1, 119:1; Rev. 22:14). God's Law is love because God loves His subjects.

The Ten Commandments (Exo. 20: 1-17; Matt. 19:18-19; Rom. 13:9), the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12; Lk. 6:31), the two Greatest Commandments (Matt. 22:37-39; Mk. 12:29-33; Lk. 10:27-28), are all designed to promote the highest well-being of all. That is the reason or purpose of God's "thou shalt not" and God's "thou shalt". These are Divine commandments or orders, directing us how we ought to use our free will. These are Divine Laws legislated by God's Divine Will, being derived from God's Divine Mind. Because God is omniscient, He knows what is truly harmful or helpful, what is detrimental and what is beneficial.

God does not give us Laws for the sake of giving us Laws, His Laws of a reason or a purpose. God's Laws are based upon His infinite Wisdom, not derived from any arbitrary will. Laws do not originate right and wrong (Rom. 5:13) but Laws declare right and wrong (Rom. 3:20; Rom. 7:7) so that we will know how to live in such a way that promotes the highest well-being of all. The Laws of God are derived from His Divine Mind (Gen. 3:22), declaring what He knows to be good and forbidding what He knows to be evil. God's knowledge of reality is infinite (Ps. 147:5) so He knows what is truly beneficial and what is truly detrimental. Sin is whatever the Divine Intelligence of God deems as harmful or hurtful to the highest well-being of all. His Laws therefore are truth; they are expressed truths of reality (Ps. 119:142). What God commands, He commands because it is right (Isa. 45:19). God Himself is subjected to His own Conscience (Gen. 18:25). To question the Law of God is therefore to question the Intelligence and Character of God.

God's moral legislation is always in accordance with His wisdom (Prov. 3:19-20; Prov. 8:12; Prov. 8:22-30; Prov. 20:18; Prov. 24:3) and goodness (1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:16). Therefore God cannot abrogate His Laws without going contrary to His wisdom and without setting aside His love for His people. But God cares about the entire world (Jn. 3:16) and therefore His Laws will never pass away (Ps. 119:44; Matt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17), His "government" is "forever" (Isa. 9:7), since He always acts according to His Wisdom and Love. God will not set aside His Laws to allow lawlessness to reign, since He is Benevolent and Wise, since He loves Himself and His subjects. A God of love without a Law of love is an unthinkable contradiction. The Law of God is as immutable as the character of God. The Law of God is the revealed Will of God (Ps. 40:8); the Law is a revelation of the heart and character of God. God longs for men to obey His good Laws (Isa. 48:18).

And because God's moral Law of love promote the highest well-being of all, and because God doesn't want us to ever sin or disobey, God has given all men the ability to obey Him, so that sin or disobedience to God's moral Law is always voluntary, optional,

and avoidable (Gen. 4:6-7, Deut. 8:2, Jdg. 2:20-22, Ex. 33:2, 34:24; Eze. 3:19, 12:13, 33:19; Jer. 18:8-10; Ps. 81:13, 1 Cor. 10:13).

And when we understand the reason for God's laws, the purpose of His commandments, it should be easy to love His Law (Ps. 119:97, 119:113, 119:163), to delight to do His will with all our heart (Ps. 40:8), to consent unto the goodness of the Law (Rom. 7:12, 7:16) because we know that God governs benevolently, with the interest of everyone in mind. Since the very essence of God is love (1 Jn. 4:8; 1 Jn. 4:16), we can understand that all that God does is loving, from His Laws to His Gospel, from His mercy to His wrath, from His Heaven to Hell itself, it is all rooted or founded on His love, derived from His benevolence. God has an infinite wise and an infinitely benevolent reason for all that He does and all that He requires.

THE PURPOSE OF PUNISHMENT

God does not punish for the sake of punishing. Punishments have a purpose or a reason. Punishments are a means to an end, and not an end themselves. The purpose of punishment is law enforcement (Dan. 6:14-16; Ester 1:15-22), or public justice. Laws consist of precepts (commands) and sanctions (punishments). A precept without a sanction is mere advice but not Law. Laws are not upheld, or enforced, unless there are punishments designed to enforce or uphold them. When punishments are not executed to enforce the laws, lawlessness and rebellion result (Ecc. 8:11). Punishments are designed to be undesirable. They are deliberately painful and miserable, so that they are to be feared and dreaded. The threatening of the sanction is meant to secure obedience to the precept. Punishments are designed to be public examples unto others (1 Cor. 10:5-6; Jude 1:7) that the severity of them will cause others to fear to follow in their example of disobedience (Rom. 11:20-22). It is not good to accept or tolerate wickedness (Prov. 18:5; Rom. 1:32).

Justice requires that the punishment fits the crime. The degree of punishment declares the value of the law. In human government, duration of punishment is determined by the value of the law that was violated. If a man steals, he may serve a couple years in jail. But if a man murders, capital punishment could be executed. Punishment, which is the opposite of forgiveness, consists in "an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth..." (Exo. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut 19:21; Matt. 5:38) so the punishment equally matches the violated Law. The degree of punishment declares the value of the law that was violated.

Sinning against God and breaking His good laws is of such a horrific nature, that the only adequate punishment is the eternal lake of fire (Matt. 2:46; 2 Thes. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 1:7; Rev. 21:8), unless atonement is made that can just as equally declare the value of the violated Law, to vindicate the rightness of the Law, and to enforce the precept of the Law. Prisons are meant to be places of isolation, to protect the law abiding citizens from dangerous criminals. Prisons are designed to remove individuals which are a threat to the well-being of others, to remove those who would harm others if left unrestrained or at liberty. God will separate the wicked from the righteous (Matt. 25:32-

46), not allowing the wicked to enter the Kingdom of Heaven to disturb its blessedness (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19:21; Rev. 21:8, 22:14-15). Hell is the prison of the universe, a place of outer darkness (Matt. 8:12, 22:13, 25:30).

Very simply, punishments uphold and enforce violated Laws, declaring the value of the violated Law, also declaring that the Law was right and violating it was wrong and thereby vindicating the violated Law, seeking to deter future rebellion and disobedience, or seeking to secure future submission and obedience from the rest of the subjects of government. Laws and punishments are designed to promote the highest well-being of all. Without the execution of the penalty, government would collapse, unless atonement is made which substitutes the execution of the penalty.

WHAT THE PURPOSE OF PUNISHMENT IS NOT

Punishments must not be seen as personal vindictiveness on the part of the punisher (Eze. 18:32; Eze. 33:1). Just as precepts are rooted in love, so also are sanctions rooted in love, both the Law and the punishment is rooted in God's benevolence (Prov. 13:23, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15). The prosecution of the law through punishments is designed to enforce good laws for the well-being of the community. That is the motive of a good prosecutor. Punishments are not designed to give sadistic pleasure or vindictive satisfaction to the punisher. Punishments are governmental not personal; they are governmental necessities, not personal vindictiveness or sadistic satisfactions. Punishments are designed for governmental vindication, to vindicate the violated laws, not for personal vindictiveness or sadistic desire.

Laws are designed to promote the well-being of the community. Punishments are designed to enforce those Laws. Personal injury against an individual is prosecuted in a court procedure as a crime against the community as a whole. For example "Mr. Morrell verses the State of Connecticut." The prosecution of a crime is not personal revenge for personal injury. Crime is treated as a matter of the state, as that which endangers the whole of the community, as violation of governmental law. Prosecution of a crime is care for the community, being governmental not personal.

We see this in the case of Daniel and King Darius (Dan. 6:7-16). Daniel was found in violation of a royal decree. The consequence, designed to uphold and enforce the decree, was being cast it a lions den. Though King Darius did not personally desire this consequence upon Daniel, but was actually unwilling that he should perish, he had to enforce his law or else rebellion would result. The Kind did not execute the penalty for any sadistic satisfaction or any vindictive gratification. It was not any retaliation for any personal injury; it was not any personal revenge. It was governmental, not personal.

We also see this governmental concern in the situation of King Ahasuerus and Queen Vashti (Ester 1:16-22). The Queen disobeyed a command of the King and therefore transgressed the law. A concern within the government of the King arose, that if Vashti was not punished, rebellion would spread through the land. So the King, out of a governmental necessity and not a personal vindictiveness, punished his own Queen to enforce and uphold his laws and protect His subjects from lawlessness and rebellion.

Scriptures tell us that God Himself takes no sadistic pleasure in the death of the wicked (Eze. 18:32; Eze. 33:1). God's wrath is governmental, designed to enforce and uphold His laws, since further rebellion results when punishment for rebellion is not executed (Ecc. 8:11). God's wrath is not personal vindictiveness designed to gratify any sadistic desire in God. God is not willing that any should perish but that men return to obedience unto His Law (2 Pet. 3:9). God prefers mercy over judgment (Jn. 8:10-11; Jas. 2:13) so that judgment is considered His strange work (Isa. 28:21).

God fills the office of Executor, prepared to revenge all disobedience to His Laws (2 Cor. 10:6), having the authority to repay and inflict vengeance upon evil men (Rom. 12:19). This vengeance is governmental, punishment is necessary to support the authority of the Law. The 1828 Noah Webster Dictionary properly and precisely defined vengeance as, "The infliction of pain on another, in return for an injury or offense. Such infliction, when it proceeds from malice or mere resentment, and is not necessary for the purposes of justice, is revenge, and a most heinous crime. When such infliction proceeds from a mere love of justice, and the necessity of punishing offenders for the support of the laws, it is vengeance, and is warrantable and just. In this case, vengeance is a just retribution, recompense or punishment. In this latter sense the word is used in Scripture, and frequently applied to the punishment inflicted by God on sinners." Punishments are not inflicted for the punishment's sake; punishments are a mean's to an end and not the end itself.

God is displeased and grieved when there is no judgment (Isa. 59:15) because government (laws and punishments) are designed to promote the well-being of the Creation that He loves (Rom. 13:4). The righteous as well rejoice in judgment (Ps. 58:10; Rev. 6:10; 18:20, 19:1-3). Laws and punishments are designed to promote public justice. The very purpose of retributive justice is to promote public justice. Both the Law of God is good and the punishments prescribed to enforce them are good.