

THE REAL MEANING OF MURDER

MATHEW 05:21–26

Introduction: Murder, Anger, Contempt, Cursing

Civilized societies have always considered murder to be a serious crime worthy of judgment. But anger is a different matter. Few have ever thought of anger as being on the same level as murder and worthy of serious judgment. However, Christ says that unjustified anger is the same as murder and will be subject to the same Judgment from God.

Note the words *brother* and *anyone* (vv. 22, 23, 24). Christ is saying that every human being is a brother under God's creation. Therefore, His words apply universally to every human being.

- I. The law: do not kill (v.21).
- II. The real meaning: anger in the heart (v.22).
- III. The growth of anger (v.22).
- IV. The judgment of anger: hell (v. 22).
- V. The answer to anger: reconciliation with a brother or sister (vv. 23-24).
- VI. The danger or damage of holding anger (v. 25).
- VII. The terrible end of anger: judgment and its surety (v. 26).

MATHEW 05:21–48 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORDS: “YOU HAVE HEARD,” “IT HAS BEEN SAID”

These words are found in every paragraph or subject of these verses. It is important to understand this: Christ is referring not only to the Ten Commandments, but also to the Scribal Law of the Jewish teachers (See Lk. 6:2; 6:7.) He is directing the listeners' attention to what they had heard from their teachers, that is, to their interpretation of the law. Very simply put, Christ is giving the real meaning of certain laws, just what God originally intended the law to say. □

I. *Mathew 05:21 The Law: Do Not Kill*

The law against murder is the sixth commandment (Exo. 20: 13; Dt. 5:17). God's law is given to protect life. Life is to be respected and cherished. No life is to be taken, neither one's own life nor the life of anyone else.

Exo. 20:13 *You shall not murder.*

Rom 13:9 *The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

1 Pet 4:15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.

II. *Mathew 05:22 After Effects of Anger*

The real meaning of this law is anger. Note what Christ is saying: He is saying that man has a problem. Man misreads God's law. Man interprets God's law to say what he wishes it to say. He applies it only to the outward act, in this case to the act of murder. He fails to look inward — within himself — to the cause (See Mt. 5:17-18; Mk. 7:14-23).

Murder is deeper than just an outward act. It is an inward act: anger, bitterness, enmity. Murder is born from within, from an uncontrolled spirit, from an unregulated urge, from an inner anger. Anger itself is the real sin, the sin that breaks the law of God. Anger is...

- bitterness and enmity
- striking out against a person
- slandering and destroying a person's image (who is created in God's image)
- rage and fury
- desiring a person's hurt
- indignation and wrath
- a hatred of oneself
- an uncontrolled spirit
- envying and killing a person's happiness

Thought 1. Note three facts.

- 1) Jesus speaks to those who know the law. The person who knows the law (the Word) needs this message more than anyone else.
- 2) God's law (Word) existed from the beginning ("long ago"). It will never be annulled or done away with. It is always to govern man. Man is always to heed it.
- 3) Striking out at a person is clearly forbidden, but so are the bad feelings against a person. Anger any bad feelings whatsoever against a person — is sin, serious sin.

III. *Mathew 05:22 After Effects of Anger*

The growth of anger is dangerous. Unresolved anger will fester. It can become uncontrollable and give birth to murder. There are three steps in the growth of anger.

1. The anger that broods, that is selfish. It harbours malice; it will not forget; it lingers; it broods; it wills revenge and sometimes seeks revenge.
2. The anger that holds contempt (raca). It despises; it ridicules; it arrogantly exalts self and calls another person empty and useless. This is an anger that is full of malice. It despises and scorns (raca). It arises from pride — a proud wrath (Pro. 21:24). Such feelings or anger walk over and trample a person. It says that whatever ill comes upon a person is deserved.
3. The anger that curses. It seeks to destroy a man and his reputation morally, intellectually, and spiritually.

There is a justified anger. In fact, the believer must be an angry person — angry with those who sin and do wrong, and are unjust and selfish in their behaviour. However, a justified anger is always disciplined and controlled; it is always limited to those who do wrong either against God or against others. The distinguishing mark between justified and unjustified anger is that a justified anger is never selfish; it is never shown because of what has happened to oneself. It is an anger that is purposeful. The believer knows that he is angry for a legitimate reason, and he seeks to correct the situation in the most peaceful way possible.

Eph 4:26 *“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”*

Rom 12:18 *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

John 2:13-16 *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”*

Thought 1. Anger is cast against many. Too often hurt feelings exist between those who are supposed to be the closest: husband and wife, parent and child, neighbour and friend, employer and employee. The Lord is clear about the matter: we must never allow anger to take hold of us without just cause.

Col 3:8 *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

James 1:19 *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

1 John 3:15 *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

Psa 37:8 *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret - it leads only to evil.*

Prov 14:17 *A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.*

Prov 16:32 *Better a patient man than a warrior; a man who controls his temper, than one who takes a city.*

Prov 19:11 *A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*

Eccl 7:9 *Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.*

Thought 2. There are reasons why people get angry and develop feelings against others:

- To seek revenge and to hurt.
- To show ego or authority..
- To reveal passion or secure some end.

- To show hurt, resentment, and bitterness.
- To express disagreement and displeasure.
- To correct a wrong (a justified anger).
- To give warning.

IV. *Mathew 05:22 Consequences of Anger*

The judgment of anger. It is a serious matter to hold feelings against another person — a very, very serious matter. There is (1) the danger of judgment (2) the danger of having to come before earthly courts, and (3) the danger of hell fire.

Thought 1 Violence is to be judged — not only before the councils of the world, but before the councils of God.

MATHEW 05:22 HELL FIRE OR GEHENNA (GEENNA)

The word is used eleven or twelve times in the New Testament, and in every case it is spoken by Jesus except in the Epistle of James. It illustrates the terrible truth of the second death, of man's final separation from God. Jesus pointed to the burning, repulsive rubbish dump outside the city limits of Jerusalem and said that it was exactly what hell was like. The dump was called Gehenna. It was in the Valley of Hinnom which served as a public incinerator. Hanging over it was a layer of thick, smouldering smoke arising from what seemed to be an eternal flame. The smell and filth became a breeding cesspool for a loathsome worm that was difficult to kill (Mk. 9:44). Thus, Jesus found in Gehenna a description of just what it means to be separated from God eternally and to die the second death. Several facts are said about hell or Gehenna:

- It is the same as the lake of fire, a place of torture (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14-15).
- It has to do with the second death (Rev. 21:8; Jn. 8:24).
- It is Hell (5:29-30; 10:28; 23:15, 33; Lk. 12:5).
- It is eternal fire (Mt. 18:8).
- It is the fire of Hell (Mt. 18:9; Jas. 3:6).
- It is unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:43-49).

The teaching of Jesus should always be remembered. Remembrance is critical in determining a person's fate. Hell is a definite place, a real place that is specifically located. It was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But all men who choose to follow self and evil and to reject God shall also be sent to hell eternally.

Mat 3:10 "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Mat 5:29-30 *“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”*

Mat 7:19 *“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

Mat 10:28 *“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Mat 11:23 *“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.”*

Mat 13:42, 50 *“They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”... “And throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

Mat 16:18 *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

Mat 18:8-9 *“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”*

Mat 23:33 *“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”*

Mat 23:15 *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites: You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”*

Mat 25:41 *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

Mark 9:43-48 *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

Luke 3:9 “The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Luke 10:15 “And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.”

Luke 12:5 “But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”

Luke 16:23-24 “In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ ” □

V. **Mathew 05:23–24 The Power of Reconciliation**

The answer to anger is reconciliation. Christ had two surprising things to say about this point.

1. The urgency of reconciliation. Reconciliation is always to precede worship. Even when we are entering the church to worship, if there is a problem with a brother, we are to turn around from worship and go to our brother seeking reconciliation. There are four reasons why reconciliation is more important than worship.
 - a. Reconciliation with God is one of the major purposes for worship. A person worships in order to seek reconciliation and fellowship with God and His people. Therefore, God does not accept the worship of a person who holds malice against Him or against any of His people. Statements of the fact make the point perfectly clear.
 - A break with another person means a break with God.
 - Unforgiveness toward another person means unforgiveness by God.
 - Not being right with another person means not being right with God.
 - Broken fellowship with another person means broken fellowship with God.
 - Bad feelings toward another person mean unacceptance by God.
 - Anger against another person means rejection by God.

A person just cannot hope or expect to be right with God if he is not right with his brother (1 Jn. 4:20-21). He must forgive and be reconciled if he expects to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

Mat 6:12 “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (see Luke 11:4)

Mat 6:14-15 “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

1 John 4:20-21 If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he

has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

- b. A person is to worship, for worship is essential to life and eternity. But worship is unacceptable to God unless a person is reconciled with all his brothers.
- c. Bad feelings between believers hinder worship. Worship is meaningless unless a person is right with his brother. Reconciliation must always precede worship.
- d. Worship is a time for a person to reflect and to examine his heart and life to see if there is “any offensive way” within him (Psa.139:24). It is essential that he search his heart. Worship is not acceptable if bad or offensive feelings against others are within the human heart.

Thought 1 How deceitful the human heart is!

- 1) Some persons try to worship while there are bad feelings between themselves and other persons
- 2) Some persons try to pray with wrath in their heart (1 Tim. 2:8; Isa.1:15).
- 3) Some persons say, “I love God” while they hate their brother (1 Jn. 4:20). And each person thinks he is acceptable to God!

Thought 2 Some persons say they stay away from worship because they have something against a brother. The point of Christ is clear: get right with your brother and get *in worship*. One sin heaped upon another is twice as dangerous and shall bring forth double judgment.

2. The time for reconciliation is while some openness still exists between the two parties. Reconciliation should be attempted immediately.
 - while a person is still in a brother’s presence: “While you are still with him” (v. 25).
 - before the sun goes down on a person’s wrath.

Eph 4:26 *“In your anger do not sin”*: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

- because a person cannot truly worship with barriers existing in the heart.
- because a person cannot offer acceptable prayers with barriers existing in his heart.
- because a person could die before reconciliation takes place and be forced to face judgment with some unconfessed sin.

Mark 11:25 *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

Eph 4:31-32 *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Luke 17:4 “If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

VI. *Mathew 05:25 The Damage of Anger*

The danger or damage of holding anger. The danger is twofold.

1. There is an earthly danger. Barriers can lead to serious action ranging from legal suits to imprisonment. Such action is tragic to God and among God’s people. It is even forbidden among true Christian brothers (1 Cor. 6:1-8). The damage of anger is many-fold:
 - It leads to increased barriers and bitterness.
 - It hurts families.
 - It is costly.
 - It damages the name of Christ and one’s own testimony.
 - It says to unbelievers that Christianity is a sham — no better than any other belief.
 - It takes advantage of another person — always.
 - It can cause an injustice to be done. The law is not always right.
 - It can cause a weak brother to turn away — forever.
 - It can cause fights, wars, suffering, and death.
2. There is an eternal danger. Life does not last, and the day of final judgment is coming. A person’s judgment for holding a grudge against a brother will be severe (Mt. 5:22; 5:25).

VII. *Mathew 05:26 The Terrible End of Anger*

The terrible end of anger is sure judgment. Christ made three strong points.

1. Judgment is sure. “The last penny,” the last cent must be paid.
2. There will be no escape. “You will not get out.” There will be nothing and no one to deliver a person from the judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

Mat 23:33 “You snakes: You brood of wipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”

Rom 2:3 So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

Jer 11:11 Therefore this is what the Lord says: ‘I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them.’

***Amos 5:18-19** Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.*

3. Reconciliation should be sought quickly: right now — before judgment, for Christ has borne all punishment for every believer (v. 25).

***Eph 2:13-14,16** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,....and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

***Col 1:20** And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

***Heb 2:17** For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (see 2 Cor 5:1, 21)*

***1 Pet 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ■*