

Mt. 5:21 ¶ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'22 "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

Before we begin to specifically look at our text this morning, I would like to review some essentials from last week's message to be sure we see what Jesus is saying is part of a specific context which is part of the formal body of the Sermon on the Mount. Last week I said that Jesus' statement about the fulfilling of the Law and Prophets is not only critical to our understanding of the Law of Christ in the New Covenant but it is vital to our understanding of all of Scripture and what the real purpose of the Old Testament Scriptures are and were. The first 16 verses of Mt.5 introduces and anticipates all the main themes of the entire Sermon on the Mount Mt.5-7. And as we have said before, this is the heart of the New Testament Scriptures and every New Testament author is expanding on these themes in one way or another.

Between the introduction Mt. 5:1-16 and the conclusion Mt. 7: 13-27, is the body of the sermon Mt 5:17-7:12. The body is bracketed or is contained in what is called an inclusio between the idea of the Law and the prophets Mt. 5:17; Mt. 7:12. The Law and Prophets is a typical way of speaking of all the Old Testament scriptures.

So what we have as we enter the body of the Sermon of the Mount is Jesus being very precise in relating his teaching to the Old Testament.

He is showing the relationship between His kingdom preaching and the Old Testament. He is teaching as a first century Jew to first century Jews and we should expect his teaching to be framed in a context that is understandable by them and seeing that He is in part correcting some misunderstandings and beliefs among those Jews.

Now let me summarize what we concluded about what Jesus taught.

The Ten Commandments written by God as a legal document given to Israel are not binding on us. This does not mean that the nine that are carried over into the New Covenant are not to be obeyed, but we are to obey them as they are given as New Covenant Law. Let's return to another mountain for a moment as we did last week, the Mount of transfiguration as it is probably titled in your bible. The passage is,

Mt.17:1 ¶ Six days later Jesus *took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and *led them up on a high mountain by themselves.2* And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His

garments became as white as light.^{3*} And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.^{4*} Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."^{5*} While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

The importance of this passage and God saying listen to Him or hear Him over and above Moses and Elijah illustrates the truth of our text this morning. Notice that Jesus is seen with Moses and Elijah who represent the Law and the Prophets. This incident is reinforcing what Jesus taught on the Sermon on the Mount for those who are now closest to him and who will have the responsibility of preaching the Gospel and making clear, in light of Christ, what the Old Covenant Scriptures said about Him. His words and commands supercede the Law and the prophets. When put together with Moses and Elijah two great spokesmen for God the soon to be apostles are told to listen to Jesus.

Christ is seen as asserting His unique and final authority as the New Lawgiver by giving a new definitive set of principles (New Covenant law-the Law of Christ as Paul calls it in Gal.6:2 and 1 Cor.9:21) that define New Covenant living under grace

Jesus is most assuredly correcting the perversions of the Pharisees, but He is also clearly giving new and higher truth that Moses never taught. Christ sometimes applies the same truth that Moses taught but does so in a manner that Moses could never have done

At other times Christ is making new and more spiritual demands on His disciples because of their being "under grace." Neither Moses nor the law covenant could ever have made these demands or laws.

That is why The Sermon on the Mount is an integral part of the Christian's rule of life today . Christ never contradicts Moses in the sense that Moses was in any way wrong. We believe in the unity of the Scriptures. Christ does, however, give the Church new and higher standards, or rules of conduct, than Moses ever gave, or could have given, under a covenant of law, but this in no way means or implies that Moses was wrong. It means that Christ is literally a new and superior Lawgiver than Moses because He administers a new and "better covenant based on better promises..." (Heb 8:6). It means that grace can make higher demands than law can make simply because of the nature and power of grace. Grace saves us, grace sanctifies us, grace sustains us and grace secures us as Christ's forever.

Grace can not only appeal to a higher motive and make higher demands, it can also empower the fulfillment of those demands.

Under a system of covenant law, like the Mosaic Law, we cannot legislate and punish the thoughts of the heart. God has both the right and power to condemn a person for immoral day dreaming in his tent, but neither Moses nor the law covenant that he gave could have someone stoned to death for wicked thoughts. It is clear that Israel was punished by God for the sin of covetousness in Isa 57:17 for example where God calls Israel sons of sorceresses and rebels,

17 ¶ "Because of the iniquity of his unjust gain I was angry and struck him; I hid My face and was angry, And he went on turning away, in the way of his heart.

However, this was a direct sovereign act of the God Who sees into the heart and not punishment at the hands of a magistrate administering the law. Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit is the personal teacher of every believer and He can deal with the heart in a way that the magistrate could not under the Old Covenant given through Moses.

It seems quite evident that Christ is actually saying far more in the Sermon on the Mount than just "This is what Moses really meant." Christ is saying, "I am in no way destroying or criticizing Moses. I am applying his commandments in an area and in a manner that neither he nor his law covenant could ever have done. I am also giving My disciples new laws that make moral and spiritual demands that are based entirely on grace instead of the Old Covenant of law."

Christ never says or implies that anything in the Old Testament Scriptures was wrong in and of itself. Remember that the God of Moses Who spoke the Law at Sinai is the same God Who spoke His grace at Calvary in our Lord Jesus Christ. John says, "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17), but in both cases it was the same God speaking and working toward the same goal even if the rule of law and the rule of grace contain different codes of conduct during a given period.

The "but I say unto you" contrasts in the Sermon on the Mount can have some new truth that Moses never gave without demeaning Moses in any way.

"We must see that Moses is finished. He has been replaced with Someone greater and better. The covenant of Moses was done away simply because it was obsolete (Heb 8:6-13). Moses did his job and he did it most faithfully. Both he and the covenant he administered were good and glorious (Rom 7:12; II Cor 3:7-11). Moses was faithful in God's house (Heb 4:2,5) as the dogmatic teacher (Gal 3:24), but his ministry or service in the house is finished. A greater than Moses is here and He has built the new and true house of God that was promised to David (I Chron 17:12). Our Lord, the Son IN Whom God has fully spoken FINAL truth (Heb 1:1-3), has replaced Moses, the servant THROUGH whom God spoke PARTIAL and PREPARATORY truth. Christ supercedes and replaces Moses as the true and final Lawgiver in the same way that He supercedes and replaces Aaron as the true and **final High Priest.**" John Reisinger-But I Say Unto You.

So, now let's continue with today's text beginning from vs 21-23 and not forgetting that Mt. 5:21-47 is the application of what Jesus said about not abolishing but fulfilling the Law and the Prophets.

Mt. 5:21 ¶ "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'22 "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.23

Jesus says this is what you have heard what the Old Testament says.

He is now going to bring correction to the errors of the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees and then He is going to tell them what the Law really meant.

The Ten Commandments did say you shall not murder but it was another part of the law given to Israel that detailed the punishment for murder. The second part of the statement was not part of the Ten Commandments but was being taught as if it were.

Then Jesus says with full authority, the first of six times He will do so in this sermon, "but I say unto you." And now Jesus explains what it really means to commit murder.

Jesus declares that murder is not only an external act that results in the taking of human life but He addresses the motive for murder and then says that this motive itself when expressed and not properly corrected is just the same as murder.

Jesus says that anyone who has anger against his brother and does not eventually reconcile with that brother is just as guilty as a murderer and ultimately will face judgement.

But not only anger is forbidden, so is contempt. and whoever says to his brother, Raca or 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court. Raca can mean empty - in modern terms you blockhead, you air-head. And then Jesus says and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.23

People who habitually and consistently act like this are subject to judgement by the court, by the council or supreme court, which could have been the Sanhedrin, and hell.

These showings of anger are not a three step progression going from bad to worse. Jesus is simply multiplying the examples to make his point. It doesn't matter which of the three represents you, He is saying to them and to us - if we have hate or unresolved anger in our hearts toward anyone, we will be judged. When Jesus uses the term brother, it is a generic term for all humanity. This anger resolving is not just between brothers and sisters in Christ even though it must at least begin there according to our text because if we cannot truly resolve this kind of animosity especially against another Christian we are in serious trouble. A constant attitude like this toward a Christian goes completely against the norms of the

Christian life and only shows contempt for Christ and His commandments and may mean that you will face eternal damnation in hell because you were not really a Christian.

Jesus here is confronting His audience and us with some hard truth. Have you ever wished anybody dead? Have you ever spoken so badly about another person that you have committed character assassination? This deep and contemptuous kind of anger is at the root of murder and should cause any person who has the ability by God's grace to be convicted by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to look at themselves honestly and see that we are not any different than a murderer when our heart is so blackened with evil intent.

In the examples that Jesus gave of going before the courts we must understand that God stood behind the laws that governed Israel as a society. All Law from God is moral and civil law for Israel was divine Law and the ultimate divine judgement is hell. God in the end looks at and judges according to the heart - not the external act. This is a far cry from what the Pharisees and Scribes thought the Law meant. The Law points to the fundamental problem - the heart. That is why Jesus speaks of anger here. It is a heart problem, it is always a heart problem. There is no such thing as a murderer without a heart motive no matter how abstract or strange the motive may seem. At another time in Jesus teaching recorded in Matthew He says, Mt 15:19* "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

Now someone by now may be thinking, but the bible says we can be angry. Yes it does, be angry and sin not. In personal relationships anger cannot lead to sin. It must be resolved. Don't let the sun set down before you have it resolved.

But then you may ask didn't Jesus get angry.

Yes he did and he told us to hate some things too.

Are these contradictions? No.

In Mt.21:21 the narrative begins with Jesus anger about merchandising in the temple.

This was wrong. He did not take it personally. It was injustice and sin to deprive people of proper items for sacrifices. He got angry over hypocrites who found something wrong with Him healing on the Sabbath beginning with Mark 3:1. In Mt.23:17 He called the Pharisees fools because they were. He did not say it out of contempt for them over personal hurt feelings or damaged self-esteem.

He was addressing sinful behavior and false understanding of the Scriptures which was holding people in bondage rather than teaching them eternal truth.

When He could have really been angry while being mistreated, whipped , scorned and mocked

He did not retaliate but said :”Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

We can be angry over sin and injustice but we cannot have unresolved anger in personal relationships with anybody. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall see God.

The problem is even when we may be angry over injustice and sin and someone confronts us about it we take it as a personal insult and are offended and then we get angry with them and then we try to justify our anger in some way because, well we were just standing up for biblical truth. Well Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.12* "Rejoice and be ANGRY? NO! BE glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So, Jesus is forbidding anger in personal relationships and gives two examples of this as we move on in the sermon to the next verses of our text.

Vs.23* "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

25* "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

Beloved, this is pretty straight forward. When we come to worship and it comes to mind that a brother has something against us – probably evidenced by a hard heart toward us or even visible upset or anger - we need to move immediately and get it reconciled or our worship is meaningless. For them the altar was the most sacred place as part of worship. It was where the sacrifices for sin and atonement were made. We don't have altars but we are a living sacrifice unto the Lord. Our hearts are our altars and they must be right with God and man for worship to be meaningful and more than just an empty religious exercise.

Rom.12:1* ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

We are more likely to remember when we have something against others than when we have offended someone else. Both require immediate efforts at reconciliation and seeking and asking for forgiveness and giving forgiveness. There is no option. As much as it is possible for you to be at peace with all men, do it. If others do not respond accordingly they are in peril, you are not. To constantly be not doing one or the other or both may see you in hell.

Jesus second example is also very direct teaching.

25* "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

This is an example of some kind of legal dispute that most likely does not have to be settled in court. Someone is in debt to someone else and for whatever reason is not settling the debt. The debtor is obviously in the wrong. If you had debt back then you went to prison until the

debt was paid. It is pretty obvious here that the debtor probably has the means to pay the debt or the example would not be a very good lesson for us if it was about a poor person who ran into very hard times and just could not pay but may have been willing to do what was possible to relieve the debt.

What we must see is that all the debt of my anger is able to be paid by reconciling with others. Jesus urges haste and says get it settled.

Jesus requires immediate action, no excuses, no psychobabble and blame shifting or excuse making. He says do it now. And if the habit of your life is to put off reconciling the warning is that you may not be what you think you are when the final judgement comes

As a New Covenant believer God has changed your heart and is constantly changing your heart as you obey and HEAR HIM, the New Covenant Lawgiver, the One who is our New Covenant.

PAGE

PAGE 8

Sunday Feb.19,2006 Mt. 5:21-26 First Baptist Evans Pastor Josphe Krygier