

## THE MOTIVE FOR MURDER

(Matt. 5:20-26)

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Every adult person in this room is guilty of murder. You say, "Who, me! I have never murdered anyone in my whole life." I am sure that no one has committed the act of murder, but have you ever been so angry with someone at one time or another that you have contemplating killing. Jesus Christ said that anger is a form of premeditated murder. In fact, all murder can be traced to anger as its motive.
- B. In the rest of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus Christ is going to instruct His disciples about motives. Christian acts are important but motives behind the acts are more important. Christ probes into the inner most recesses of the human heart and expects His people to have righteous lives that glorify God.

### II. THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS -- 5:20

- A. "For I say unto you," -- Christ speaks out of his own authority as the God-Man to his disciples.
- B. "That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."
  1. The righteousness that Christ is speaking about is personal and practical that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit as the Christian walks daily with his Lord. Remember, the Sermon on the Mount is for Christians, who have experienced the new birth. Positional or imputed righteousness, which comes from Christ, is assumed, but the result of being saved is a practical life of holiness, which is a by-faith righteousness.
  2. The scribes were the doctors of the Mosaic law, and the Pharisees were religious men who attempted to practice it to the letter. The word Pharisee means separatist. Their righteousness was external and not internal through the Spirit, and Christ tells his disciples that their righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees or they would never enter the kingdom of heaven or really be saved. Salvation is not only past from the guilt and penalty of sin but it is present from the power and \_\_\_\_?\_\_\_\_ of sin. By faith, Holy Spirit produced righteousness will be the product of the truly saved person.
  3. These religious Jews knew the Mosaic Law but added many human traditions and made the equal to or even above the Law as it was in the O.T. They had drawn up these man-made rules and regulations for life and conduct, which in their strictness went far beyond anything we find in the O.T. Scriptures. They were guilty of legalism.

**NOTE:** These religious Jews had an external kind of righteousness, keeping the letter of the law but missing the spirit of it. The tithed everything, were highly religious and most punctilious in their observance of certain religious services and ceremonials. They became very separatist with a "holier than thou" attitude, which resulted in a critical spirit towards everyone and everything. These religious men

became self-righteous, self-satisfied and self-centered, and did things to please men rather than to please God.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Fundamentalists

We who are called evangelicals or fundamentalists must be careful of having a Pharisaical attitude about life. We see other men obviously denying the faith and living godless lives. How easy it is to become critical and self-satisfied because we think ourselves better than they, and say, "I thank God I am not as other men and especially as that modernist." We have a right creed, a right ritual but in acts of mercy, grace and love there is much to be desired.

4. True Christians are to have a completely different kind of righteousness, which comes through the Spirit of God. Christ has no use for religious formalism without a genuine heart for God.

*Matt. 23:5-7: But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and lone the upper most rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.*

*Matt. 23:23-28: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pat tithe of mind and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whitened sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*

**NOTE:** They had traditions, a proper creed, a proper ritual and a zeal for their religion but their hearts were far from God in mercy and faith.

### **III. THE FOLLY OF MURDER 5:21, 22**

- A. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, *Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment*"
  1. Christ is now going to contrast the false interpretation of the Law by the Pharisee and scribes with the true interpretation that proceeds from Himself. The Pharisees believed the Law but they had added so many traditions that the law had lost its meaning.
  2. He picks at random the Sixth Commandment of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not kill" Murder is not the same as killing. Murder is premeditated. Killing was allowed in the O.T. for capital punishment and war.

*Exodus 20:13: "Thou shalt not kill."*

*Numbers 35:30, 31: “Who killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.”*

This of course, refers to premeditated murder and the consequences of capital punishment. The religious Jews felt that if they had never committed the act of murder, they were righteous before God. It was merely an external keeping of the law. But the Sixth Commandment deals with murder and all its premeditations. Pharisees restricting to the deed of murder along (homicide) But Christ goes deeper -- thoughts, words, motives as well as deeds. Anger and insult as well as murder.

- B. *“But I say unto you,”* -- As the author of the Law, Christ certainly has the right to give it a proper interpretation.
- C. *“That whosoever is angry with his brother (without a cause) shall be in danger of judgment:*
  - 1. Our Lord gives the true interpretation of the Sixth Commandment, which prohibits not only the overt act of murder but every evil working of the heart and mind which led to it. Anger can produce the desire to murder and the thought is as bad in God’s eyes as the act. The letter meaning of the Six Commandment is, “Thou shalt not kill” but the spiritual meaning is, “Thou shalt not hate.” NOTE: Murder begins with motives which are evil (Mark 7:21-23). Sin is on the inside, not the outside.
  - 2. It should be noted that not all anger is wrong. It is anger without a cause that is motivated by hate, envy or jealousy that is sin. There is a holy anger or an anger of righteous indignation that is motivated by right which is not. Eph. 4:26: “Be ye angry and sin not.” Our Lord showed this anger when he drove the money changers out of the Temple. A parent can show holy anger when children do wrong.
  - 3. Christ’s whole point is that the breaking of the Sixth Commandment does not just bring the judgment of the civil courts as the Pharisees said, but it brings the judgment of God. These religious Jews had only a legal understanding of the Law. They had no spiritual, moral and ethical understanding of the true meaning of the Sixth Commandment.
- D. *“And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council:*” -- Raca means “empty head,” and is equivalent to “bone-head or knuckle-head, numskull, nitwit.” This refers to scorn and speaking contemptuously about another because of an uncontrolled temper. An insult to a person’s intelligence. Christ goes beyond the Pharisees and say that evil speaking but of anger is a point upon which one can be dragged before the earthly courts and the Mosaic law permits this.
- E. *“But whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”* -- “Fool” is also a term of scorn. “Raca” scorned a person’s mind but scorns his heart and character which is more serious. To say a person is a “fool” (you scoundrel) is to mean he is

morally worthless, a scoundrel with little importance to life. Our Lord says for a person to make such a statement out of anger stands in danger, not merely of a local court, but of God's judgment. Actually there are many worse things you can call a person than a fool. Christ is pointing out that all unlove is worthy of hell regardless of degree.

**NOTE:** What honest person could deny the fact that he has broken the Sixth Commandment as interpreted by Christ Himself. *I John 3:15: He who hates his brother is a murderer.* Anger and insult are ugly symptoms of a desire to rid yourself of someone in your way.

#### **IV. THE PREVENTION OF ANGER AND POSSIBLY MURDER** 5:23, 24:

*"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the alter, and there remembers that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the alter, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."*

- A. The Lord now gives an illustration of how to minimize anger and hard feelings in our relationships to other people. NOTE: The Sixth Commandment not only states that it is wrong to harbour murder and evil thoughts in our heart against another; but our Lord states that it implies that we should take positive steps to put ourselves right with the brother.
- B. The Jew would offer his animal sacrifices in the temple at the alter, for Christ had not yet died to fulfill the O.T. offering system. The Lord teaches that if a Christian Jew had any malice in his heart towards another or if he knew of someone else who had ill will in his heart for him, he was to go to that person to get the thing settled before he ever offered the sacrifice to God. There could be no true worship of God when there are strained relationships between believers and others. Brother, if you are in church, in the middle of the worship service, and you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave church at once and put it right. Do not wait till the service has ended. Seek out your brother and ask for forgiveness. Then come back to the worship service. External worship can never cover up for moral failure. It is better to obey God than to have mere externalism and ritual.

*I Sam. 15:22: "And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*

**POINT:** The application to all Christians is clear. A person cannot be right with God until he is right with man. If a Christian is harboring unkind and unworthy thoughts about another, all of his external Christian formalism is worthless until he rights the wrong with his brother. **APPLICATION:** How wrong it is to cover up our social responsibilities to all men by much Christian activity. What hypocrisy it is to be outwardly doing Christian things when the whole time there is ill-feeling towards another person.

#### **ILLUSTRATION:** Young Church Woman Who Hated

Just recently I heard of a woman who professed to be a Christian and a good church goer. She had all the fundamental jargon and put on a good front. One day, an

unsaved friend asked her to take something to one of her Christian friends who attended the same church. This church woman said, "I will not! I don't like that lady even if she is in the same church. As a matter of fact, I have not spoken to her for years!" The unsaved person turned in disappointment and disgust and said, "If that is Christianity, I do not want anything to do with it!" And I can't blame her, for I want nothing to do with that attitude either. But I thank God that real Christianity is not like this professing Christian attitude.

#### V. THE EARTHLY CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER 5:25-26

"Agree with thine adversary quickly (Make things right), whiles thou are in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." -- Christians are to make things right with all their adversaries, lest those they have hurt or offended take them to court for slender or something worse. We must never allow an estrangement to remain much less to grow. If we have sought reconciliation and the offended party refuses to forgive, he has the problem not you. Leave him in the hands of God.

**POINT:** For a display of anger, a Christian may pay the consequences before the earthly courts if he is brought before them. Anger has many serious consequences. This involves immediate, urgent action. If we have offended by deed, word, look or thought, and if we have hurt and wounded, we need to be sensitive and deal with it immediately

#### VI. CONCLUSION:

- A. By motive each Christian is guilty of murder but Christ died for his sins. He has a glorious Sin Bearer who removed the guilt and penalty of sin forever for the true Christian. Christ died for every sin, outward and inward that the Christian, 1) has committed, 2) is committing and 3) will commit. We who have trusted in Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, have the forgiveness of all sins through Christ's blood.
- B. But what about the unsaved man? What about the person who is not a Christian? There is no forgiveness for him. He must pay the consequences for his sin which is hell fire or eternal judgment. Is there no hope for the unsaved man? Yes, there is hope but it is not found in himself but in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christ died for sinners and was resurrected from the dead to declare men righteous. Christ will not save everyone but He has promised to save all who come to Him through faith. What must you do to be saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.