

²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister, will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. ²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Personal story about anger

1. The various translations and commentaries have this section labelled with words like murder or anger, and even though these verses are not primarily about anger, I wanted to share my experience with it as a sort of background. When younger, in my early twenties, I had a big problem with anger. My first marriage ended because of it. Later I determined to do something about it, but not yet being a believer I followed the world’s ways: I joined a group called AMEND which was formed to help men deal with anger issues. When I got there I discovered all the men in the group were abusive, were there under court order, and I was the only one voluntarily attending. This was my first experience with uncontrolled, violent anger. The procedure was to talk in a group setting about personal anger episodes, discuss the feelings involved, receive feedback from members, and move on. I lasted six weeks; the group decided I was too touchy-feely, showed too much emotion, and voted me out. I was never gladder to get out of anywhere!

B. World’s ways are not God’s ways

1. The point is that the world’s ways are not God’s ways
2. What the world finds important matters little to God
3. The men in that group did not want to hear about my awakening spirituality

C. What was Yeshua trying to accomplish with the Sermon on the Mount?

1. Was refocusing the 1st Century hearers to the meaning of their covenant with God.
 - a. A renewal
 - b. Was giving a framework of what covenant looks like
2. Yeshua was saying ‘Blessed are those who walk faithfully with their eyes on the age to come.’
3. Keep the Torah wholeheartedly
 - a. Don’t be hypocritical; respond rightly
 - b. Don’t have feigned obedience; be ‘all in’
 - c. Obedience from the heart is clearly what the Torah was about from the beginning.
4. In the last verse of the previous section Yeshua said

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

- a. Yeshua was calling out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and refocusing the people on the true intent of the Law

- b. Was admonishing the most studied, righteous, and self-important leaders of the day
 - c. Was saying their righteousness didn't reach deep enough
- D.** So what is enough; just what is it that matters to God; what does it mean to be right in our heart with God and others?
1. Righteousness
 2. Relationship
 3. Reconciliation

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS MATTERS

- A.** You have heard it said...
1. Referring to teaching of many of the religious leaders of the day, many of whom were hypocritical
 - a. The oral traditions, not the written Law
 - b. Yeshua was poking at hypocrisy of the teachers
 2. Not just about murder or anger
 3. Offers a contradiction to outward obedience without inward purity
 - a. Obeying the letter but not the spirit of the Law accomplishes nothing
 - b. Internal purity and righteousness
 4. Achieving righteousness requires going internal
- B.** Internals matter more than externals
1. If one's heart is not right one can still be breaking the Law by what is inside
 2. Exterior and interior lives should be consistent
 3. Yeshua is talking about anger which has developed into smoldering, brooding, vengeful anger
 - a. This is anger which has gone several steps beyond simple irritation or frustration.
 - b. Long lived, easily deteriorating into bitterness if not dealt with
 - c. Undealt with irritation or frustration have a way of growing into real ugliness
 - d. Two examples
 - 1) 'Raca' is not a word exactly, but an attitude
 - a) Conveys contempt, calling the person a brainless idiot
 - b) Casts doubts on person's mental ability
 - 2) 'Fool' (μωρος, moros), means morally foolish
 - a) Casts doubt about a person's character
 - b) Angriily destroys a person's character
 4. Interior lives affect everything we do
 - a. Negative interior leads to criticism and judgement of others and condemnation for ourselves
 - 1) 'Hell' (γέενναν, Gehenna)
 - 2) Place of constant burning where bodies of criminals were disposed of
 - 3) A vivid image for hell
 - b. Positive interior leads to blessing and affirmation for others and eternal rewards for ourselves
 - c. We can choose how we respond to situations; which will it be?
 5. Verses:

James 1:19-20 *My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*

Colossians 3:5-8 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

Ephesians 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, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

III. RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

- A.** God cares about relationships, both horizontal and vertical
1. All the Law and the Prophets hang on relationships.
Matthew 22:37-40 *Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*
- B.** In our flesh we cannot keep to the letter of the Law, let alone the spirit of the Law
1. Even if we could externally our heart would betray us
 2. Vs. 21-22 were all about how easily we fall into hurting one another
 3. Immediately when recognizing that, we must take care of it before everything else
- C.** Broken horizontal relationships hinder our vertical relationship
1. Achieving righteousness in this case means understanding others and hearing their perspectives on a situation
 2. If we have hurt someone we must fix it
 - a. Internal attitudes can hinder our ability to worship
 - 1) Sinful attitudes will throw up blockades against God
 - 2) Inattentive or careless attitudes will distract our focus away from God
 - b. Just because we are in congregation doesn't make us obedient believers
 - c. Just because our body is here doesn't mean our heart is.
- D.** Sin separates
1. Humans from God
 2. Humans from one-another
- E.** Verses:
- Matthew 5:9** *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*
- Romans 12:17-18** *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*
- Romans 14:17-19** *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*

IV. RECONCILIATION MATTERS

- A.** It gets tougher
1. We are commanded to rein in our tongue.
 2. Not only are we responsible to control our own speech and attitudes, but we are also responsible to reconcile ourselves with a person we discover is angry with us.
- B.** Again back to the basics
1. God's foundation is to maintain righteous relationships at all times; with Him and with others
 2. Reconciliation is more important even than religious duty
 - a. Verse indicates the urgency—'stop what you're doing immediately'
 - b. Leave your gift and go!
 3. Doesn't make any difference who is in the wrong

4. Both offender and injured party have responsibility to heal the separation
 5. Whoever is aware first must bring it up.
- C. Reconciliation applies both within the community (brother or sister) and outside it (adversary)**
1. Reconciliation is pleasing to heart of God's
 - a. Failure to reconcile blocks God's blessings
 2. Failure to reconcile spreads division like a cancer
 3. Reconcile and love even one's enemies

Matthew 5:43-45 *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."*
- D. Reconciliation brings healing**
1. To the offender when initiating
 - a. Requires the offender to step down from pedestal of superiority
 - b. Humility offers the offender a chance to step beyond prejudice or judgment to reach relationship
 - 1) Even if reconciliation doesn't bring full relationship it's a bridge for future growth
 2. To the injured party
 - a. Offers the chance to forgive the offender
 - b. Gives the sense of valued relationship
 3. To both parties
 - a. Reunites and reinstalls relationship
- E. Reconciliation is a way put our relationship with God into practice**
- a. Forgive one another

Ephesians 4:32 *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
 - b. Love one another

John 13:34 *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."*

V. SUMMARY

- A. Poor heart attitudes can be a barrier to God.**
1. This passage, under the surface, is about finding peace with all people
 - a. Peace with ourselves: anger which leads to rage is unhealthy physically and spiritually
 - b. Peace with our friends: reconciliation of small issues nips the big issues 'in the bud'
 - c. Peace with our adversaries: reconciliation is a testimony of the love of God
 - d. Peace with God: Heart attitudes can subtly cause us to turn away from God
 - e. Living with peace in the heart is equivalent to being holy.

Hebrews 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

1Peter 1:15-16 *But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*
- B. Poor heart attitudes will...**
1. hurt people
 - a. Even casual remarks can hurt feelings
 2. hurt us
 - a. Poor heart attitudes that bring us legal consequences can hurt us financially and emotionally

- b. If we don't deal with the problem early hard times may come
- C. Put peace into practice

1. Show small kindnesses
2. Love God in everything we do

Matthew 22:37 *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'*

Romans 12:2 *Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Romans 8:28 *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

VI. APPLICATION

A. We are entering hard times

1. Did your side lose the last election?
 - a. Is there some person you hate because of it?
 - b. Are you envisioning that person in a medieval prison?
 - c. Did you call that person a fool in the Greek sense (casting doubt on his character)?
2. Did your side win the election?
 - a. Are you gloating inside?
3. Is there some person whose name causes you to grind your teeth?
4. Is there a person you will cross the street to avoid encountering?
5. Have you been cut off in traffic and then laughed when you saw that person pulled over?
6. Is there anyone you are not right with?

B. Who's judging whom?

1. Who are we to judge other people?
 - a. We don't know their experiences
 - b. We don't know how life has shaped them.
2. It is not biblical to hold anything against anyone
 - a. We've never 'been inside the other person's skin'; in light of this we should be gracious and kind regarding their actions
 - b. Love our neighbor as ourselves
 - c. As God's children we have the responsibility to reflect His standards to the world
 - d. He would rather discipline and train us in righteousness than allow us to be condemned along with the world
3. God is certain about this

James 4:11-12 *Dear friends, as part of God's family, never speak against another family member, for when you slander a brother or sister you violate God's law of love. And your duty is not to make yourself a judge of the law of love by saying that it doesn't apply to you, but your duty is to obey it! There is only one true Lawgiver and Judge, the One who has the power to save and destroy—so who do you think you are to judge your neighbor? (TPT)*

1Corinthians 11:31-32 *If you do not sit in judgment of others, you will avoid judgment yourself. But when we are judged, it is the Lord's training so that we will not be condemned along with the world. (TPT)*

- C.** Personal story: No one is immune to these requirements. You have heard pastors say that they get ‘hit’ by the same experiences they are preaching about. It was the same for me this week: I began to realize that I had an attitude against a loved brother as I prepared this message. God wouldn’t let me rest until I went to that brother to resolve the issue. I wouldn’t say it is completely resolved, but we are on track with changes in place to reach that resolution. It wasn’t easy, but healing is coming.
- D.** Holy Spirit time: What do we do now?
1. In light on the challenges of this last year is there any one you are not right with?
 - a. Political or cultural leaders: Is there any leader who brings up strong negative feelings? Are we gracious and biblical when talking about this person?
 - b. Interpersonal relationships: Is there anyone in our personal lives we have an issue with? Do they have an issue with us?
 2. Go to God
 - a. Ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts to reveal anyone we are not right with (Psalm 19:12-14)
 - b. Remember, reconciliation of differences is so important to God that if we don’t honestly examine ourselves God will bring His loving discipline into our lives (1Corinthians 11:31-32)
 - c. If someone comes to mind
 - 1) Repent to God, agree with His righteous standards and call upon Him for help
 - 2) Think about our unrighteous actions and speech toward this person, recognize them as sinful and ask God to forgive us
 - 3) Ask God for help with our attitude toward this person
 - a) “God show me how do you see this person”
 - b) “Help me feel about this person the way you feel about them”
 3. There can be different results
 - a. If we don’t know the person (political or cultural leader) this is the end of our responsibility
 - b. If we have relationship with this person
 - 1) Go to the person one-on-one in an attempt to resolve things
 - 2) If that doesn’t work go a second time with a mature believer in an attempt to be reconciled (Matthew 18:15-18)

VII. REFERENCES

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