



Mid-Week

**Bible Study and Prayer
Wednesdays 6:45pm – 8pm**



Good Hope Baptist Church

Pastor Josh Franklin

If Looks Could Kill (Exposing Murder in the Heart)

FUNNY: A little boy, doing a homework assignment on war, asked his daddy, "What causes people to go to war?"
"Germany invaded Poland," his father answered.
"No son," his mother interrupted. "That's not how it started. Hitler seized power."
"Look," the father said, "He didn't ask you. Let me answer the question."
"Why?" the mother demanded. "Don't you think I know anything?"
"Butt out of the conversation!" the father shouted.
"Well, that does it!" the mother yelled back, and she stormed out of the room.
"Thanks," the boy said. "Now I see how wars start!"

- What kind of people make you angry? Do you ever get angry enough that you wish someone were dead?

FUNNY - One woman went to the doctor, he looked very serious and she said, "What's wrong?" He said, "You have rabies." She got out a pencil and started to write and he said, "What are you doing, making out your will?" She said, "No, I'm making a list of people I'm going to bite." **I believe I've met her.**

Matthew 5:21-26 (NKJV) (with notes italicized in parentheses)

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, '*You shall not murder* (see Ex. 20:13-Deut. 5:17), and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'

²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' (an Aramaic term of derision, kind of like our "blockhead, numbskull") shall be in danger of the council (Sanhedrin – the ruling body of Israel, the highest of human courts). But whoever says, 'You fool!'^a (idiot; moron) shall be in danger of hell fire. (literally, Gehenna; a valley outside of Jerusalem where in the Old Testament period children were sacrificed to a pagan god; later used as a burning trash heap; a metaphor for hell)

²³ Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled (make peace) to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ Agree (reach an agreement; settle matters) with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and

^a "Raca" vs. "Fool"?? The distinction intended between "Raca" and "Fool" is uncertain. Some think "fool" is simply the Greek translation of "Raca", no distinction being intended. Others think it is a transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning "rebel". Others think it means "fool" from God's point of view – an obstinate, godless person, so that "Raca" would be insulting one's mental abilities, and "fool" one's character. [Transline NT]

you be thrown into prison.

²⁶ Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Parallel passage - Luke 12:58-59 – identical to Matthew 5:25-26

Jesus had just shocked His hearers when He said that one cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven unless his righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Beginning with verse 21, Jesus explains precisely what He means by righteousness that outclasses the piety of the scribes and Pharisees. In the previous lesson we saw that the Pharisees had an external righteousness, a piety totally for outward appearance in order that they would be admired by people. The righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees is an internal righteousness – touching the motives, intentions and condition of the heart. (Kendall, 110)

- Jesus was not adding to the Ten Commandments.
- Jesus was contrasting the Pharisees' interpretation of the Ten Commandments with what Jesus said was the original intent of the Command.
- "You have heard that it was said" is because the religious leaders taught the Law, and then expounded on it.
- "in danger of the judgment" meant that a person would be culpable before the civil courts. The Pharisees made this a civil law as opposed to a moral law. God said don't do it, but the Pharisees don't mention that.

Pharisees focused on **Outward Murder**; Jesus focused on **Inward Attitudes**.

Pharisees focused on **Fruit (Murder)**; Jesus focused on **Root (Anger)**

Murder is committed when a person removes another human being from this life, having no concern for that person's life or loved ones. Such selfishness is murder! When there is a threat and you are ruthless and selfish, you remove it – you just get that threat out of the way. So, whether that threat is an enemy or an unborn, unwanted baby, murder is sheer selfishness.

Murder is killing another human being on purpose. The 6th Commandment does not refer to plants or animals. This command refers to an offense – a homicide, killing another person. Note, too, that this does not refer to war or capital punishment. In war, one is not angry with a soldier on the opposite side. Capital punishment is dealing with a crime; the punishment is not meted out by personal vendetta.

1 John 3:15 - Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

This verb in the Greek expresses continual action – **"Anyone who keeps on hating his brother is a murderer..."**

"In the heart there is no difference; to hate is to despise, to cut off from relationship, and **murder is simply the fulfillment of that attitude.**"

To live in the practice of murder - or to have a life style of the habitual hatred of our brethren - is a demonstration that we do not have eternal life abiding in us, that we are not born again.

FUNNY - Some might be saying, "I can skip this commandment; I'd never kill anyone." Others might say, "I would never think of murdering someone, but I have smiled when I read certain obituaries."

I. The Sin of Cherished Anger (v. 22)

The word translated *angry* (*orgizō*, or-gid'-zoh) refers to deep-seated, smoldering anger that refuses to forgive. It is seen in the holding of a grudge, in the smoldering bitterness that refuses to forgive. It is the anger that cherishes resentment and does not want reconciliation. Jesus is teaching this kind of anger is a form of murder and deserves the same *judgment*. Murder is the outward act, but it is rooted in inward anger.

The writer of Hebrews identifies its depth and intensity as a “**root of bitterness**” (Heb. 12:15). Such anger, Jesus says, is a form of murder.

The person who harbors anger shall be guilty before the court. To be guilty before the civil court should have been to be guilty of murder and deserving of the death penalty. Anger merits execution, because the fruit of anger is murder.

II. The Sin of Conceited Anger (v. 22)

Raca - brainless idiot, worthless fellow, silly fool, empty head, blockhead - It was a word of arrogant contempt.

A Jewish legend tells of a young rabbi named Simon Ben Eleazar who had just come from a session with his famous teacher. The young man felt especially proud about how he handled himself before the teacher. As he basked in his feelings of wisdom and holiness, he passed a man who was especially unattractive.

When the man greeted Simon, the rabbi responded, “**You Raca! How ugly you are. Are all men of your town as ugly as you?**”

“That I do not know,” the man answered, “**but go and tell the Maker who created me how ugly is the creature He has made.**”

To slander a creature made in God’s image is to slander God Himself and is equivalent to murdering that person. Contempt, says Jesus, is murder of the heart.

My Personal Admission - Several years ago, as I was internalizing and meditating on this passage, the Lord began to convict me. I cannot remember calling someone worthless – but I have certainly called some people idiots. The phrase I have used is: “All that person is doing is sucking up someone else’s oxygen.” – That’s exactly what this Scripture is saying – RACA! Who am I to call someone worthless? Each person is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and yet, I stand as judge and jury over the life of someone whose story has not been completely written yet. God may change their heart and life.

The contemptuous person shall be guilty before the supreme court, the Sanhedrin, the council of the seventy who tried the most serious offenses and pronounced the severest penalties, including death by stoning (see Acts 6:12—7:60).

III. The Sin of Condemning Anger (v. 22)

Mōros (fool) - “stupid” or “dull” and is the term from which we get moron. **It was sometimes used in secular Greek literature of an obstinate, godless person. To call someone You fool was to accuse them of being both stupid and godless.**

The three illustrations in this verse show increasing degrees of seriousness. To be angry is the basic evil behind murder; to slander a person with a term such as *Raca* is even more serious, because it gives expression to that anger; and to condemn a person’s soul by calling him a **fool** is more slanderous still.

Jesus’ prohibition is against slanderously calling a person a fool out of anger and hatred. Such an expression of malicious animosity is tantamount to murder and makes us **guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.** *Gehenna* (hell) is derived from Hinnom, the name of a valley just southwest of Jerusalem used as the city dump.

It was a forbidding place where trash was continually burned and where the fire, smoke, and stench never ceased. The location was originally desecrated by King Ahaz when “**he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom, and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel**” (2 Chron. 28:3). That wicked king had used the valley to erect an altar to the pagan god Molech, an altar on which one’s own children sometimes were offered by being burned alive. It would later be called “**the valley of Slaughter**” (Jer. 19:6). As part of his godly reforms, King Josiah tore down all the altars there and turned the valley into the garbage incinerator it continued to be until New Testament times. The name of the

valley therefore came to be a metonym for the place of eternal torment, and was so used by Jesus eleven times.

To call a person a fool is the same as cursing him and murdering him, and to be guilty of that sin is to be worthy of the eternal punishment of fiery hell.

CONCLUSION – You Can't Undo the Past

You can kill a reputation by your whispering criticism. I heard of a man who became angry at someone in his church. So he started some hurtful rumors about the individual. Soon there were a group of people who believed the rumors. The man whose reputation was ruined suffered a heart attack because of the false rumors. As he laid on his hospital bed, in walked the man who started the rumors. He apologized and asked for forgiveness. He said, **"I had no idea that it would hurt so. Please forgive me."**

The man forgave him and then asked if he would open the window. He opened the window and then asked, **"Is there anything else I can do for you?"** The man said, **"Yes, would you get that other pillow over there."** The man picked up the pillow and then was asked to hold it out side the window and release all the feathers outside. The wind blew the feathers in several hundred different directions. The man then asked, **"Is there anything else I can do for you?"** The man who suffered the heart attack said, **"Yes, would you go and gather up all the feathers?"** The man replied, "I can't do that, it's impossible." The other man replied, **"And it is impossible for you to undue the damage that you heaped on me."**

ALTERNATE STORY – HERCULES AND STRIFE

There is an old legend that tells of Hercules encountering a strange animal on a narrow road. He struck it with his club and passed. Soon the animal overtook him, now three times as large as before. Hercules struck it fast and furiously, but the more he clubbed the beast, the larger it grew. Then Pallas appeared to Hercules and warned him to stop. "The monster's name is Strife," he said. "Let it alone and it will soon become as little as at first." This is valuable advice for those of us Christians who engage in counterblows, thinking that only thus can we stop the blows.

How much better to see the best in others: It was said of Alexander Whyte, the great preacher of Edinburgh, "Watch out for Whyte! All his geese become swans." Whyte had a way of seeing the best in people and bringing it out. This is the way of the righteous in his or her relationships. How much better than going through life seeing all the swans as geese!

Ephesians 4:31-32 - ³¹ Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. ³² And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

The sermon was not intended to be an exhaustive list of every possible instance of application, but a *pattern* which is to be learned, and then generalized to all attitudes, words, and actions in our lives. In [5:21-48](#), Jesus presented six examples supporting his thesis ([5:20](#)). He could easily have provided more. But his purpose was not to teach every possible example, but *a way of thinking*. This approach would prepare believers for every possible situation they would face.^b

^b Stuart Weber, *Holman New Testament Commentary – Matthew*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2000), Under: "Matthew 5 - The King Speaks His Heart (Part I)".