

## **“Jesus’ Take on Anger”**

**(Matthew 5:21-26)**

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**October 26th, 2008**

**Proposition:** We are to maintain pure relationships by avoiding anger.

### **Introduction**

We’re entering a part of the Sermon on the Mount that speaks about various moral issues—murder and anger, adultery and lust, divorce, oaths and lying, revenge and retribution. All of these issues are still concerns today. With all the talk that social scientists give about how mankind is improving, it’s funny that mankind has yet to solve some of its biggest issues. The last 60-70 years have been the most violent in all of history. There are wars or some involvement in war in every continent on the planet. And on a personal level, these issues will be with every generation until the end of days. The reason is because at the core humans beings are the same. Regardless of how technologically advanced we become, or how well we apply methods to improve society, at the core, human beings will be the same. We are sinful people, we are sinful individuals.

So here’s what I cannot do as a pastor of the gospel, as a person who’s in charge of properly interpreting and communication the Word of God. I cannot merely preach moralism. Moralism is basically what our public schools do for our kids. Moralism is nothing more than teaching that tells us to be better, that you can be better. Christianity does not teach moralism. It teaches human depravity. It teaches that you’re a lot worse than you think. It teaches that you can never be good enough. It teaches that the moral standard is nothing less than perfection. And it teaches that apart from the help of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we can never conquer these moral issues that plague all of our lives. That’s the only way our goodness can exceed that of the most moral person.

And here’s another reason why we, as Christians, absolutely have to address these moral issues. Evangelism. You can’t imagine how many times I’ve heard this statement. My friend, who happens to be a \_\_\_\_\_ (Muslim, atheist, etc), is better than any Christian I know. What is he saying when a statement like that is made. 1) he hangs around with only bad Christians. 2) his statement about Christians and morality is true.

You know what folks, there is no reason, why Christians shouldn’t be the moral standard in every society on the planet. Not in a, “look at me, I’m better than you” sort of way. The reason we can and should be the moral standard in society is because we’ve been changed. A change that no human being, no amount of education, no amount of parental discipline, no amount of love for society cannot cause change, like Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and then gave us the Holy Spirit to cause in us transformation. The bible says our old nature has died, a new nature has been given to us. The bible calls our salvation a new birth, a new creation.

Let's look at the issue for today: anger.

TNIV Matthew 5:21-26

<sup>21</sup> "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.'<sup>22</sup> But 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 Sanhedrin. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to that person; then come and offer your gift.

<sup>25</sup> "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.<sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Studies and surveys have shown that one of the biggest issues facing all people is the problem of anger. If you think about it there's really no reason to doubt this. Anger is a part of the emotions of every single person on the planet. And so it's no wonder why Jesus addressed this as the first of several moral issues to tackle in the Sermon on the Mount.

As I was thinking about anger I thought of several factors for why anger is such a problem with so many people.

1. A mis-aligned relationship with God. When this is out of whack, we relate to people and situations in hardly the best way. We take matters into our own hands. When we're control freaks, instead of letting God be in control. When we aren't trusting in the sovereignty of God.
2. A life that is undisciplined. I find in my own life that anger comes when I'm undisciplined. When there is a lack of discipline, there is often a lack of control, and when there is a lack of control, we approach that tipping point a lot quicker.
3. Poor relational skills. Our view of people is not according to what is taught in the Bible. So we don't view people as those bearing the image of God. We don't live out the command to love our neighbors and our enemies.

But there are those times when things are completely out of one's control, when someone does something harmful to you, something totally unexpected and undeserved, such as an act of violence, or an unprovoked slander from a coworker. These things can happen to anyone at any time. And when such things happen, what will our response be?

Folks, look, everyone has an anger issue. Everyone. We often think it's just that person with the explosive disposition. Oh but watch out for the ulcer brewing quiet ones...they're the ones who go on shooting sprees. They're the ones whose neighbors say, "He always kept to himself." Folks, all of us have a problem with anger.

And this is the area Jesus wants to address in our lives today.

The series of moral teaching by Jesus all begin with this phrase...

"you have heard that it was said...but I tell you". The first part was in reference to the incorrect way the people viewed and interpreted the OT law. In the second part Jesus is not introducing a

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new law, but instead he is offering the correct interpretation of the old law. Remember Jesus didn't come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

The Pharisees had set up oral traditions, and there was nothing wrong with that. But what the Pharisees had done was to place the oral tradition on par with the Bible. That was their mistake. And their other mistake was misunderstanding and misapplying the Old Testament law in the first place. You can say that they tried to keep the letter of the law but completely forgot about the "spirit" of the law. And whenever we get into that trap, our lives turn Pharisaic and we become legalists.

We know that the command not to murder was the sixth of the Ten Commandments. It dealt with the way people and societies, particularly God's people related to each other.

In the OT, when a murder occurred, the murderer had to be brought for judgment in the Jewish courts. A sentence had to be administered by judges. (Deut 16:18). But the person who is angry, that will never be brought to a court of law, right? Police aren't going to knock on your door because you were angry. But, there is a great court, a greater judge that looks at not only the actions of people, but their hearts and motives too. So the person who is guilty of anger will be brought to judgment by God. And that's why Jesus took the command to its root and forbade anger.

The root of murder is anger. And anger is murderous in principle. You are not doing morally better just because you haven't killed anyone.

I understand that these days people murder for all sorts of reasons. Gang members initiate their members by telling them to kill an innocent person. Drunk drivers can kill with their vehicles and probably were not angry at all. People kill for power or for money and anger may not be behind it at all. But the majority of murders and violence to others are done in anger. Domestic violence, robbery, theft, road rage...all done in anger.

What could a person do to someone that the person would want to kill that person? It's possible. Haven't there been times in your life where you hated a person so much you didn't care if that person was dead. Or you wished something terrible on that person. I think we as part of the human race are very capable of murder. Adultery. Business partner cheating you out of your fortune. What if someone raped your daughter. Wouldn't murder become a viable option?

I think we all can envision anger becoming so intense and so built up that we would want to kill and that is why Jesus says that to be angry with someone is the same as murder.

And for the crime of anger you won't be prosecuted in a human court, but in the court of God. For some reason, many people fear the judgment of a human judge more than the judgment of God. But the bible says, not to fear the one that can destroy the body, but to fear the one who can destroy the body and the soul in hell.

And to say Raca (imbecile, fool) (equivalent to slandering one's character) you are subject to the Sanhedrin, but to say "you fool" (you retard, idiot, said in anger) you are subject to the fires of hell. So the person who is angry enough to say these things that defames a person who bears the image of God, is guilty enough to go to hell.

Where does that leave you and me? Have we dealt with anger too lightly? Have we merely brushed it aside as being normal? Have we justified it by finding fault in the other person? Friends you and I have to see anger for what it is: as a sin that is evil in the eyes of God.

**How serious is anger?** So serious to God that you can't have a fellow person (Christian) angry at you and offer worship to God.

*<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to that person; then come and offer your gift.*

Here it is not you who is angry at someone else, but you are the one who has made someone else angry. The truth is that we are more likely to remember when someone else has offended us rather than when we have offended others, so Jesus picks the one that is more often forgotten and tells us to go and make it right.

Coming to the house of God to worship him is one of the holiest things a person can do, right? And how often to we come into the house of God with anger or poor relationships. I think the devil knows how important it is so he'll do whatever he can to ruin the hours we spend before coming to church. He'll instigate a fight over the bathroom or something stupid like that. So be on your guard and if there is anger, well, that's why we pray before worship begins. Sometimes we are angry because of the other person. And sometimes we may have been the instigator. Either way, with anger in our hearts, worship becomes unacceptable, perhaps impossible.

This is very similar to what James 3:9 says when he speaks of the tongue. On one hand the tongue offers the most beautiful and holy praises to God and on the other hand the tongue spills out curses and filthy words. This should not be. This is an impossibility.

So what's the advice Jesus gives us.

Leave your gift at the altar. Halt the worship and then go and make wrongs right. Apologize. Seek forgiveness. "Saying sorry is a difficult thing to do. You have to swallow your pride. Tail between the legs." Jesus is also saying that until you make the relationship right, your worship/offering will be unacceptable. Because there is sin. I think you and I have become far too comfortable with sin. I think we learned from our parents, that there can be a huge feud in the church, where it's on the brink of splitting and they can wake up on a Sunday, put on their best clothes, carry their bible, prepare their tithes and offerings, paint on a smile, and they actually think that they can sit in the same chapel, with incredible anger and resentment in their hearts and offer worship that's acceptable to God. That's not possible.

The bible says that God will not hear our prayers because of sin in our hearts. I know, we say, but I already asked God for forgiveness. Great. Now Jesus is saying. Okay. God knows you're sorry, now make sure the person you offended knows you're sorry, too.

I wonder how many of us have presented unacceptable worship to God on Sunday mornings because we have offended someone or we were angry with someone. We need to go and make it right.

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**Conclusion:**

**Righteous Indignation**

You might have a serious anger problem. Present it to God, confess it to Him. Ask him to transform your character. Ask the Spirit of God who resides in the temple that is your heart, to come and remove your anger, to rechannel that anger.

You know there's a better way to channel your anger. It's toward the things that makes God angry. That's when Jesus was angry. He was angry at injustice, sin, and hypocrisy. Get angry at that stuff.

In Mexico....Laura's story....crying....incredible anger at poverty and injustice. I wanted to kick poverty and injustice in the teeth.

Folks you can let anger control you or you allow God to control your anger. We have that choice every time we're faced with anger. We can choose to sin and get angry or we can choose to obey and not get angry. If you have a difficult time with anger, ask the Lord for help to control your volatile temper.

