

1. "Adversary" means an opponent in a lawsuit, or a possible lawsuit.
 2. The implication is the adversary is right in bringing suit.
 3. The offender's duty in such case is to hasten to make reconciliation before anger runs its full course, in breeding other sins, etc.
 4. "In the way with him" -- i.e., before reaching the judge.
- D. **The danger to which anger exposes:** *"Lest haply the adversary deliver thee to the judge and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison."* (25b)
1. It is better to come to terms and make a settlement with those we have offended than have sentence against our evil fully executed against us.
 2. Jesus may mean more than a literal prison here: The prison made by one's own accumulated anger, bitterness, hostility, etc.
 3. To be locked in prison by one's own malice or hate is to be in one of the world's worst and most costly.
 4. It is better to agree with one's adversary in advance of trial so as to avoid serving a prison sentence, whatever the prison.
- E. **The last farthing:** *"Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing."* (26)
1. Jesus alludes here to imprisonment for debt.
 2. But whatever the debt involved, unless settlement is reached prior to sentencing, the prison term of the guilty had to be served unto full payment was made.
 3. What was then true of imprisonment for debt is even more true of the eternal prison into which men are cast by their own malice.
 4. Jesus here teaches us to make things right quickly, before judgment: After judgment there can be only payment of debt--in full.

--Charles Crouch

"The Law Against Murder"

Matthew 5:21-26

INTRODUCTION -

I. ALL GOD'S COMMANDMENTS ARE FOR OUR GOOD

- A. His law concerning the sacredness of human life is most important.
- B. God's will is for all to live together in love.

II. THE LAW OF MOSES WAS TO PASS AWAY BY FULFILLMENT, NOT BY DESTRUCTION.

- A. The law taught reverence for human life, our most precious personal possession.
 1. To understand God's law and treasure human life means we will live and let live.
 2. But it also means to live and help live.
- B. Jesus kept, upheld, and taught respect for the law.

III. IN THIS PART OF HIS ADDRESS, JESUS EXPLAINS THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT AND GIVES ITS NEW TESTAMENT MODIFICATION AND APPLICATION.

- A. This is a lesson against murder and the condition of heart that leads to murder.
- B. This law is founded upon the fact of man's creation in God's likeness.
- C. One can commit no more grievous sin than murder: It is to violate the two greatest commandments of the law and the gospel. (Matt. 22:37-40.)

DISCUSSION -

I. THE LAW CONCERNING MURDER. (Matt. 5:21,22.)

- A. **Thou shalt not kill:** *"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."* (21)
 1. Jesus lived under the law which included God's teaching against murder, one of the precepts of Noah. (Gen. 9:5,6.)
 2. God's law is a hedge of protection of life from evil doers.

3. *"Ye have heard"* refers to what they were accustomed to hearing.
4. *"In danger of the judgment"* refers to the civil or municipal judges, the "council of seven" in the cities of Palestine (Deut. 16:18f), not to the Sanhedrin, or to final judgment.

B. The Lord's modification: *"But I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment."* (22a)

1. The sixth commandment dealt with murder itself.
2. Jesus extends the principle to the cause of this sin--silent anger in a malicious heart--forbidding the murderous anger back of the murderous act. Jesus makes the murderous heart equal (in danger and guilt) to the murderous act.
3. Though *"without cause"* may not be in the Greek text, according to many ancient manuscripts, to argue there can be no just cause for any anger is to "discredit our Master." (Mark 3:5; cf. Chappel, p. 146.)
4. What Jesus forbids is anger without just provocation: vindictive, selfish, brutish, exceeding due bounds, and without any good end.

C. Against ugly names: *"And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council."* (22b)

1. Railing speech: anger expressed in words of contempt, or reproach.
2. An expression of contempt, meaning senseless, "empty headed," or a "spit-out."
3. *"The council"* was the Jewish Sanhedrin, Israel's supreme court.
4. Jesus means that by such language one has committed himself to a course of conduct which will lead him to trouble--serious trouble.

D. Grave danger: *"And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire."* (22c)

1. Murderous words of bitter reproach intended to injure, meaning "thou impious wretch," a stupid, wicked fool.
2. *"The hell of fire"* -- i.e. "Gehennah," a term derived from the valley of Hinnom, southeast of Jerusalem, where the Canaanites sacrificed their children in fire to the god

Moloch; and, hence, in the Jewish mind, because of its association with sin and suffering, a place of final punishment. In the N.T., always applied to eternal punishment.

3. In this passage Jesus teaches love and respect for man, and he forbids words of contempt and cursing.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT APPLICATION OF THE LAW AGAINST MURDER. (5:23-26.)

A. An urgent obligation: *"If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee."* (23)

1. Having forbidden the anger which produces murder, Jesus now extends the matter to *the duty of reconciliation*.
2. The imagery is Jewish, but we do have an altar in this dispensation. (Heb. 13:10,15; cf. 1 Peter 2:5.)
3. We do not bring gifts to the altar as did the Jews, but the lesson to us is plain nevertheless: If the heart is not right toward our brother, the fruit of our lips or heart cannot be right for the offering of acceptable worship or praise to our Heavenly Father.
4. *"Hath aught against thee"* -- You remember and know it because you are guilty of wrong, *not* what another *thinks*, but what you *have done*.

B. Leave there thy gift: *"Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."* (24)

1. This gives primary importance to an often neglected duty.
2. It means "Stop the worship of God." (cf. Joshua 7:10-13.)
3. It is possible to deceive our hearts. (James 1:26.)
4. There is a disposition to justify self.
5. "Thy gift" might be a song, a prayer, etc., but in the case mentioned it could only be an abomination. (cf. Prov. 6:16-19.)
6. Some offer this (at variance with some brother) as an excuse for not coming to the services.

C. Agree with thine adversary quickly: *"Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art with him in the way;..."* (25a)