

THE CONTROL OF ANGER

Matt. 5:21-26

INTRODUCTION:

We now begin as I stated last week, a new section on the Sermon On The Mount.

I hope that you have fixed in mind V. 17-20 in which Jesus pointed out that he was to fulfill the law and not destroy it.

Now we must weigh every word of this great sermon. It is a manifesto - it is not an ideal to strive for. But this is how you must live if you are a Christian -- a kingdom man. This is the way that you are going to think, and speak, and you are going to act.

The law was many hundred years old at the time that Jesus delivered the sermon but Jesus saw more than any of the past teachers or prophets. He applied the law to life and to human relations for the first time.

And he came up with something that was entirely new. Now the principle had always existed. Now remember the things in the Bible are true. And Jesus is going to now specify some of the problems of moral conduct concerning the meaning of the law.

For example, he takes up murder and links this with anger. Now next week we take up adultery, and divorce and retaliation and oaths. And how one should treat his enemies. This helps us to realize how Jesus is going to fulfill this law. This is about the new man of the kingdom and the whole thing that is going to regulate his life is righteousness. Now let us understand that Christ is not giving us a set of rules for the guidance of society. But he is giving us the moral principles which apply to those who are his followers. Those in the kingdom. And Christ requires his people to do certain things because they are

the natural outcome of the character required in his followers.

V. 21.
I. The Origin Of Anger - V. 21

Our Lord is concerned here in describing the citizens of the kingdom of God or of Heaven. And he is going to expound that relationship of the Christian to the law. That righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees or the Scribes if indeed you are a citizen of his kingdom. And the law is over against the exposition of the Pharisees.

Jesus begins by saying or using a formula -- ye have heard that it was said by them of old. He is referring - is it to the law of Moses or to the teachings of the Scribes. Those who say it should read to them of old times. Or was our Lord really doing this to show us the true teaching of the law over against the false representations it made by the Pharisees. Remember, it is significant. They attach most things to tradition. Always quoting their fathers. You have heard that it was said by them of old time. He does not say you have read in the law of Moses. But ye have heard. That is what you have been hearing - that is what has been said to you - what has been preached to you, in the synagogues. Now the teachers of that day added their own interpretation. And it was almost impossible to tell which was law and which was interpretation.

Jesus in an extra-ordinary way said, I say unto you - this of course amazed them all. Now I am interpreting to you the law of Moses and this is true. It may not be that of the Pharisees. I, who am speaking to you, am the very one who is responsible for the law of Moses. For you see, he had a part in giving the law. And what Jesus said is actually important here because he wants them to get the true principle of the law. In human nature we always prefer to have things cut and dried rather than have them in the form of principles. Certain

forms of religion are always popular. The natural man likes to be given a definite list - then he feels as long as he conforms to the things stated in the list - all will be well. That is why it is much easier in observing Lent for six weeks during the year, than it is to think about being holy in terms of the regular routine of life. Jesus is going to give us the true interpretation of the law and it begins with the question of murder.

✓ Now as long as the Pharisees and Scribes did not actually murder a man - they thought they had kept the law perfectly. But they were missing the whole point and the spirit of the law.

Not that I should literally not commit murder - but my attitude toward my fellowmen should be right and should be in love.

Now Jesus is going to explain the same truth in the matter of adultery. We shall see that it may not be an actual physical sense - that a man may keep the law but what is the spirit of the thing. What is your desire as you look, etc.

Now the same teaching will come forth in the matter of taking an oath.

The law must not be thought of in just the negative manner. But it must be something positive. There are still people who seem to think of holiness and sanctification, in purely mechanical maneuvers or procedures, so long as they are not guilty of drinking or gambling. Their attitudes are purely negative. It does not seem to matter if they are jealous, envious, and spiteful. In fact, you can be full of pride.

Now we must not think of living a holy life as something grievous - but as growing into the fullness of Christ - which he commands us. And the one great test which you must always apply to yourself is this -- what is my relationship

to God? Do I know God. Am I pleasing him. You ask yourself, if you have committed murder - been guilty of this. You thank God and all is well.

But you ask yourself - has God been supreme in my life today? Have I lived to the glory and the honor of God. Do I know him better? Has there been anything in me that has been unlike Christ? Imaginations, desires, thoughts, or impulses.

Then you will come to discover the (real origin) of anger. For Jesus is really reminding you and reducing the manner of the law when he says, you have heard it said, thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill is in danger of judgement. That is a conceivable result. And if you do kill, you are in danger of the civil, local court. And they will bring you into judgement. Thou shalt not kill. If you commit murder then certain consequences are then to follow. Now they had reduced the law and confined it. In fact they had defined the law in such a way that it enabled them to escape it. The commandment he says includes not only actual physical murder but also anger in our heart against a brother.

// Whosoever is angry with his brother -- now those who said if you murdered you were in danger of judgement. Actually the place that this started was in the man's heart. He was angry. This is the real spiritual content of the law.

The origin of hate and feeling of bitterness and unpleasantness, unkind feelings, or resentment toward a person is murder. This is what Jesus is saying.

Now life is man's most precious possession. As long as there is life there is hope. But (when) there is no life, then there is nothing else of real value. The authority of Jesus is here real - that I say unto you. He would appear to go further than the law and many would question Jesus, as being a radical. Moses

rules dealt with external action.

Jesus would go on inside the heart of man. Do not even be angry.

There are more ways of killing a person than by stabbing or shooting.

A successful laundry firm some years ago had the slogan, stop killing your wives -- let us do the dirty job.

Now the thing that was happening with these people was this -- they made a profession at keeping the law and at the same time they were getting away with murder.

So the origin - alright, that's the law. But they had said all sorts of things about it. But Jesus said, now let's complete it. If you are going to be a new man of the kingdom, you should not even be angry with your brother. In their conduct, they say, "I could kill you." Now character expresses itself in conduct. Did they get mad - oh yes. They got mad. And they thought they were doing the will of God.

Now this is to draw a lesson for ourselves. Did you ever hear the story about the Preacher who was playing golf, with the three Deacons. On the first tee, the Deacons got off long straight drives, right down the middle of the fareway. The Preacher teed up, concentrated, took a terrific swing and dug the ball 20 feet. He didn't say a word - he just smiled sweetly, turned red in the face and spit. Where he spit the grass died instantly.

Anger is a problem to everyone, including preachers. And it is not right for us to shrugg off our grudges and bad tempers by saying that everyone has them. We are to hold our tempers and be masters of it, and not by it. And that what Jesus is doing, he is coming face to face with the matter of anger.

Righteousness is going to succeed if we are going to fulfill the law. Here is a strong prohibition. You must not -- you must not do it, you must not murder. Now what is Jesus going to say. You are going to be liable for judgement -- all murderers are. Everyone being angry with his brother, he says, is going to be liable for judgement. I say unto you, a man who is angry with his brother is liable for the judgement too. Why? Because angry will lead too - it is the spring and the source of murder. Now don't get angry with your brother. A lot of people think as long as they get mad - they can get as mad as the devil. And if they don't get the opportunity to knock off his brother's block - to knock him out, then it is alright. If something just keeps you from killing him, murdering him - then you are still righteous.

The idea here is that anger strikes at the very existence of the human family and must be prohibited. And it is threatened by condemnation before the high court.

Never forget that anger originates in the heart. People say, well, I guess I just lost my head. The word for angry here is origin of our word (orgy) or "fit of temper." Anger and hotheadedness might have caused as many deaths as deliberate and intensions. Outward expressions of sin begin on the inside. And anger is potential criminality. The heart controls and begets the hand control.

I I. The Explosion of Anger - V. 22

Now anger stimulates the nervous system by pouring powerful adrenalin into the blood stream. One speaks thoughtlessly under this influence. Therefore Jesus stipulates the same restraint of anger that Moses does for murder. Danger of judgement, danger of the courts of that day.

Now the expression here used in V. 22 concerning without cause is not found in the oldest manuscripts they tell us. That this lead-way should not be put in here. That there is no space for this sort of anger. Because we can always find a cause to be angry with another when we want too.

In either case, it is conceivable that a man might become angry justifiably. And kill in defense of a loved one. But on the other hand the scales are tilted.

V. 22
There are two words in the Greek with meant anger. Thumos, referred to anger with flares up like fire in straw. Quickly blazing up. But it is just as quickly died down. Now the word in this verse is orgizes thai -- which means a long living, smoldering kind of anger. The phrase without cause is in none of the major manuscripts. And so this verse absolutely prohibits anger. In danger of judgement - the local court in the village that dispenses judgement.

I want you to notice the explosion that takes place here - that he talks about. In the first place, in the form of scorn. V. 22. In which he had the word raca. As far as can be determined, this word means empty. It was probably like empty-headed, block-headed, stupid. It was just a way of denting oneself by words of name-calling. And a prelude to stormy relations.

This word which seems to be untranslatable is also described as a tone of voice when you meant a brainless idiot. A brainless blunder. To be silently angry.

Now this explosion Jesus said put one in danger of the council of which meant the Supreme Court of the Jews.

In studying this verse of Scripture, I went back and found a note in which

Dr. Hershey Davis made a comment about this word raca. He said, that he thought it was a (nasty term)—and that he would not give the equillivant in his class. Because he said back there they called a spade a spade much more than we do here. And without any feeling about it. So his idea was that it was a very nasty term. It was a vulgar term. And indicated a mean spirit. Now he said that anybody who despised his brother -- that he was on the verge of the next thing, of hating him.

2 — Once again the explosion here mentioned made in the form of a personal insult. Thou fool. Describes a moral fool. This was a term in which there was anger on a person's character. Now this has to do with labelling. This is enough to start a brawl and it brings uncontrolled violence in the heart of a man. You call a man a moran - the Bible language of fool. Usually points to one who is a fool morally. And this really is an attack on his character and is a reflection on his mentality. That you are intellectually superior - that one feels to a brother. That this leads him to despise the mind and the attitude of a brother. He sets himself up as despising his brother. Now we know what that sort of thing may lead too.

The (ultimate punishment) of Gehenna.

Now this explosion may be a long lasting anger and it is bad. It may be in the form of speaking which is worse. And then it may be in the form of slaunder character assination. And this is worst of all.

This feeling of anger -- this dislike is in the heart. Now it may be concealed from the eyes of men. But it is like murder. If you are angry in this way - Jesus said you are going to be brought into court.

Gehenna, the valley of the Hell of fire. Because fire was always burning in its forbidden precinct that had destroyed and poisoned the cities health. Where there is no system of drainage, the fire, the dogs, the worms, are indispensable.

Now this anger is in liable of the courts. These are solemn words. The soul of man is looked upon here. Are you angry with someone. Then Jesus says you have been summoned to Christ's bar of judgement.

So often we are angry with people whom we have wronged. There is therefore no better way of saving us from the explosion of danger. Than by undoing the wrong. This is what our Lord is speaking about - our inner feelings, to have things in this way.

I II. The Punishment Of Anger - V. 21-22

It seems to me that punishment of anger can be summed up in that one is in danger of Hell's fire. Now this means that bitterness and hatred in the heart continue to find expression and words and it is pointed out in this chapter. It is dangerous error for us as Christian people to feel this way. Because we are Christians--and we cannot say the Sermon on the Mount does not have anything to do with us because this is what it is all about and it searches out the depths of our being. Here we are confronted with not only actual murder but all that is within our hearts. All the feelings and sensibilities.

Does this mean that anger is always wrong or always prohibited. Are there not illustrations of anger of Jesus in the New Testament, in which he referred to the Pharisees as blind and hypocrites. How do you reconcile this, with Matthew, when he pronounces whoes upon them. There is no real difficulty in

this question. When our Lord pronounced these woes, he did say in a judicial manner - he did so as one given authority by God to do so. He has offered the Gospel to them - the opportunity has been given to them. And they rejected it. He was really denouncing their self-righteousness in rejecting the grace of God.

Our anger must only be against sin according to the Psalmist. We must never feel angry with a sinner - but only have sorrow and compassion for him. Those who love the Lord hate evil, says the Psalmist. Rom. 1:18.

The holier we become, the more anger we will feel against sin. But we must never, I repeat, feel angry against a sinner. We must never feel angry with a person, with an individual. We must never be guilty of this. There is a fine line of distinction. Do not feel or imagine Jesus said simply because you have not committed a murder - what is the state of your heart. How do you react to things that happen to you. Do you find yourself blaring into a raging temper when someone has done something to you. Or do you sometimes feel anger against a person who has really done nothing to you at all.

Now these are the matters -- it is that which God meant. God seeth the heart. And that is when he said, Thou shalt not kill. So let every man examine his own heart.

Mark 9:47-48 - gives you a description of the valley of Gehenna - of Hell-fire, that he talks about here in this verse.

The holy God expects us then to give consideration to this.

IV. The Relationship Broken - V. 23-24

V. 23
V. 24
V. 23 - Therefore if thou bring thou (gift to the altar) and you remember that thy brother has ought against thee. The first relationship broken is the relationship with your brother. Now if you are doing what you consider religious service and going to church and things like that, you are going and offering at the altar your gift. If you remember that you have something against your brother, Jesus said you (go) and make it right. He says if you remember that your brother has something against you, you just leave your gift right there. And go off and first be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.

What is he talking about. That you are not going to have any variance with the life of your brother. Don't leave out that brother now.

Now I am not trying to make the Sermon on the Mount apply where it does not apply. But see the point in your life - you ^{must} must have action or things that will cause interference with the life of your brother. Such a thing exists - you had better get rid of it, before you start doing what you call a religious observance.

Now the very first thing that you must have that indicates your righteousness is, you have peace in your life. And you don't have anything in your life that is going to hurt your brother. Therefore, your relationship here, you had better cultivate peace with your brother.

We are not to harbor our evil thoughts in our hearts. We are to make things right. We are to get these things out of our hearts. Or else our whole spiritual life is in danger he says.

Suppose a man has already entered the church and the collection plates are about to be passed. At this point he remembers that here is a brother or a sister who have had an argument and a fit of temper. He should at once abandon his offering. Go out and make up with this brother or sister. If thou bring thou gift to the altar and there remembers the broken fellowship with the estranged brother.

Now this procedure cannot be used to just dodge the collection plate. Or to minimize your responsibility to tithe and offerings to the Lord. Rather does it emphasize that your gifts which come from your hands may be proud and may come from unreconciled hearts. And these are unacceptable. Of course the Lord wants and needs your money but he wants and needs a pure heart. Your conscience needs to be clear in this matter.

V. 24
Another relationship that is broken in V. 24 that anger breaks your relationship with God. Now when a worshipper brought a sacrifice to the temple and he remembered that he had done wrong, he was to go out and get that right because it was the indication that he was not right with God. Man's first responsibility is to be right with God. Then he can establish the right relationships with his fellowmen.

Anger affects a person's relationship with God. And no offering to the church will off-set it. No amount of service will cause God to forget it. Nothing will do but for the wrong to be right again.

Now this is the reason why people feel that their prayers never get beyond the ceiling. They have a smouldering anger in their hearts and it prohibits a good relationship with God and with their fellowmen. Now you had better get things right between your adversary. But you say, I am going to sue you or I am going to be smart. I have my rights. I will fight until Hell freezes

over some people say. Well, alright. What does he say will happen. Hell will freeze over too, won't it - and you'll be underneath freezing. In the Roman law they understood that when you took one into the presence of the court, but if you ever got it into court - it went on through.

V. Remedies For Anger - V. 25-26

Now you had better get a right attitude and you had better settle with your opponent before going to court. This is what Jesus is saying here. Agree with the adversary quickly. Now you may be angry and you may say some little foolish things - but look where it leads. It leads to murder and it is very dangerous he says because until thou has paid the utmost - V. 26. You won't get out until you have paid the (last cent) - the last half of penny. You won't get out.

V.26

You had better hold down that anger about your brother. Anger leads to murder. Now can you see that the right and the good prevail if you go and get into the clutches of the devil yourself. Instead of exhibiting the character that God has given you and caused you to use - the devil from the beginning uses you because he was a murderer.

Now this business of anger destroys. It destroys a man or a woman so far as letting it go on in his life. That area in his life is destroyed. It conditions a man. It makes a man a slave. A man is no longer free to act in that area. If I can make you mad - I can condition you and I can make you take attitudes where you can't act freely in certain lines.

Psychologists says you are conditioned - your reflexes are conditioned - and you are conditioned whenever you get mad. Like on a football field - if

you get the opponent mad then you can handle him. When anybody makes me mad - Jesus is teaching a lesson as you would a little child. Like teaching a child two years old - you come along and try to teach him his numbers. You would try and tell him the relationship between one number and another. You wouldn't do that way. You would get him blocks and let him handle those blocks and when he could handle those blocks it would make real sense to him. That would be sensible. Now God is creating people of righteousness. And he was doing this through his law. And this is what Jesus is doing - using something very sensible and very spiritual. To understand - it was an awful time to teach men about being angry. It is not an easy thing to teach people about the matter of anger. Because we have so much war and so much stress and strain between races and individuals. And there is so much in the world today to stir up one's inner being.

But Jesus is talking about men not having any of these attitudes, that would lead to evil. He does not have contempt on his brother and he restrains from anything like violence or anything that would cause friction of an evil nature. He is not going to let anger control him.

v. 25 "Agree with your adversary." It means to have a good mind. Don't let your mind be torn up by a fellow who would treat you unjustly. Don't let him make you angry.

The answer here is your brother who might irritate you and who might treat you unjustly. You are to get in mind that you are not to get angry. Because really your anger doesn't hurt them after all. You hurt yourself. And here is the character that Jesus is talking about. And it is not something that is hurting somebody else but is hurting you. And it is sort of a truth that we must not be embroiled with other folks.

I think this means to agree -- simply to be friendly and kindly exposed. If trouble persists - let it come from the other side - not yours. It takes two to make a quarrel. Prove yourself to be a son of God by being a peace-maker.

In the way, refers to the right of the defendant to settle out of court. While in route to the judge - it is less painful, less expensive, and less destructive of human relations not to go to court. You may win your rights and gain several enemies in the process.

Now the unbelieving world has seen a Christian at outs with a brother. Therefore this makes a big involvement in something that is great. Stay out of court whenever possible. Settle your difference privately and personally and avoid bringing them before the church. (Satan) seldom has more cause to rejoice when family, churches, or organizations split.

The Christian must refrain from every disagreeable attitude. If any cause of discord exists - it must ^{BE} removed before the performance of the most holy of all duties.

Remember it is impossible to harbor eminity and be at peace with God.

Now elsewhere in the Bible it says, don't let the sun go down on your wrath. Do you know how to keep a log fire from smouldering all night. Pour water on it. The same thing works in the human heart. When the Christians feel anger burning in their hearts - they do not let that fire live. He certainly must not feed it and shelter it. He must stamp every last ember of it out as quickly as he can.

The great remedy for anger is first of all the (righteousness) must exceed that of the Pharisees. Jesus expected his followers to understand that the way they were to accomplish all of these requirements was by their relationship of faith to him.

Now staying close to Jesus is the only way to control anger. Walking with him, talking with him, letting him live through your life - this seems to be the only way to deal with this matter.

Now what about those relationship between you and your brother. What about the things that are in your heart. You have not settled them and attended to them. Settle it at once, saith Christ. You may not be here tomorrow morning and you are going to eternity like that. Therefore agree, he says, while you are in the way.

How do we feel about this part. Are we aware of the condemnation.

His terms are very easy. They are very just. And they are just this. That I face and acknowledge this sin and I face it and confess it utterly and absolutely and that I stop any self-defense or self justification. Though some other person should provoke me.

I must just confess and admit it without any reservation to God. If there is something in actual practice that I can do about it - I must do it at once.

I must humble myself. And let the other person gloat over me if necessary - and long as I have done everything that I can do to remove the barrier and the obstacle.

Then he will tell me that all is right. I will settle with you. Indeed I

will forgive.

This is exactly the Gospel - that Jesus Christ came into the world to pay the price for. Thank God he has terms for bankrupt sinners. Whatever you may be convinced of at this moment, Jesus says, leave your gift. Run away. Make that thing right while you are in the way.

This is Jesus' invitation. That if necessary, we should retract our part whatever it may be, ask forgiveness, for any ruffled feelings, unkind or harsh words, or icy reserve and accept the invitation to become a living sacrifice. Which is our reasonable service according to Rom. 12:1. I think this is the desire of the human heart. To be an entire offering to God.

Do what you can to get it settled against your brother - do something.

LaFontaine, a chaplain of the Prussian army, once preached in earnest of the sin of a hasty temper. The next day one of the majors came to him. And well sir, I see, he said, that you had something very sharp and made some sharp hits yesterday. And the chaplain said that perhaps in preparing that sermon, that there were some sharp things in it. The major said I have a hasty temper and I cannot help it. I cannot control it - the thing is impossible. Later on the chaplain preached a sermon on self-deception. And the vain excuses of which men are accustomed to make. A man will declare that it is impossible to control his temper. When he very well knows that ~~they~~^{if} were the same thing ^{showed} to happen in the presence of his sovereign king. He not only could but he would control himself entirely. And yet he dares to say that the continual presence of the king of kings has no restraint or fear. The next day, he met that officer again. You are right chaplain - hereafter when you see me in the danger of falling, remind me of the king.

I think this truth is well taken. When we think about our anger. Let us consider that we are in the presence of the King - Jesus Christ. And this perhaps will lead us and assist us in controlling this anger which we have.

God is waiting for us to come to some kind of agreement with him, and with others.