

Exposition of Matthew

Anger and Reconciliation (5:21-26)

Introduction to the Antitheses

1. Some have argued that Jesus is contrasting His teaching with the Law and Moses.
2. Jesus authoritatively interprets the true meaning of the Law and thus true righteousness (5:20).

“Far from contradicting the Law, Jesus endorses it, insists on its authority and supplies its true interpretation” (Stott, 76).

“What Jesus did was to explain the true meaning of the moral law with all its uncomfortable implications” (Stott, 80).

3. The Pharisees extended and added to the Law, adding externals to externals.

I. The Antithesis (5:21-22)

A. You have heard that it was said...

1. In the Rabbis’ teaching and oral tradition on the sixth commandment

2. Their focus was on the external act of murder alone.

John Murray, “It is this externalism that Jesus proceeds to correct; He focuses attention on the emotions of the heart and the words of the lips.”

3. Liable to judgment/court = probably human court

B. But I say to you

1. Whoever is angry with his brother
“The root of murder is anger, and anger is murderous in principle”
(Carson)

1 John 3:15

2. Whoever says to his brother, “Raca”

3. Whoever says to his brother, “Fool”

II. Reconciliation as the Way of Righteousness (23-26)

A. The worship setting (23-24)

B. The judicial or legal setting (25-26)

Conclusion: God never wanted people to merely obey rules; He wanted them to be holy as He is, to value what He values” (Keener).

1. Anger is the root of murder, in principle it is murder. To allow anger and hatred to pervade our heart and our words is to put ourselves in serious jeopardy.
2. Instead, we ought to be quick to make peace, especially when we are at fault.

The commandment not to murder is more than to not take a life.

Q & A 105

Q. What is God’s will for you in the sixth commandment?

A. I am not to belittle, hate, insult, or kill my neighbor— not by my thoughts, my words, my look or gesture, and certainly not by actual deeds— and I am not to be party to this in others; rather, I am to put away all desire for revenge. I am not to harm or recklessly endanger myself either. Prevention of murder is also why government is armed with the sword.

Q & A 106

Q. Does this commandment refer only to murder?

A. By forbidding murder God teaches us that he hates the root of murder: envy, hatred, anger, vindictiveness. In God’s sight all such are disguised forms of murder.

Q & A 107

Q. Is it enough then that we do not murder our neighbor in any such way?

A. No. By condemning envy, hatred, and anger God wants us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to be patient, peace-loving, gentle, merciful, and friendly toward them, to protect them from harm as much as we can, and to do good even to our enemies.