



## Deut 5:17 ' You shall not murder.'

After their expulsion from the Garden of Eden, one of the first consequences of the fall of man, was the first murder. No sooner had Cain and Abel the first two sons of Adam and Eve, grown to adulthood that Cain became jealous of Abel his brother and murdered him.

The sons of Cain continued in the line of their father, and actually got to the point where murder was something they gloried in. Cain's great-great grandson Lamech for instance sings the following song to his wives: "*Then Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me."* My Friend Rick Phillips rightly described this as the world's first Gangsta Rap song.

And unfortunately from Cain's time onwards, murder has been one of the abiding signs of our fallen nature, our slavery to sin. Although men have dreamt of peace and harmony, and end of hatred and murder amongst men, written songs about it, the only hope for true harmony lies in the gospel, and perfect peace will only come when the prince of peace returns and his gracious rule is established in the new heavens and new earth. But until that day, when sin is done away with forever, we have the moral law given to us as a reminder of how we are to conduct ourselves as His children, not in lawlessness, but in holiness, not as slaves to sin, but as slaves of righteousness.

The sixth through eighth commandments are the shortest in the Decalogue and surprisingly simple in their Hebrew form. Each of them is only two words, the particular negative *Lo* or "no" and then the thing that is prohibited so literally they read, no murder, no adultery, and no stealing. In the Hebrew then this commandment is simply ***Lo Ratsach***.

A lot of misunderstandings regarding this commandment have been brought about by the King James Version's translation of the word Ratsach as kill. So that for instance, whenever they a convicted murderer is about to be put to death by the state, there are inevitably protestors outside the prison carrying signs reading "***Thou Shalt Not Kill***" which is ironic, because the commandment covers only what the condemned man did to be put on death row in the first place, namely an unlawful and unauthorized killing, and **not** the legal execution that the state is carrying out. As a friend once said, *what a shame we aren't allowed to post those signs in schools were they might possibly have done the prisoner some good before he grew up and became a murderer.*

There are other verbs for killing generally that occur more commonly than ratsach, *harag* which means to kill and *hemit* which means to put to death. But what God is forbidding is specifically murder and suicide, or more correctly, self-murder, and not just killing. I make that point because there are forms of killing that are not forbidden by the commandment, ***Lo Ratsach***:

It does not relate to the killing of animals.

It does not apply to the lawful defense of one's home from a thief breaking in during the night:

*Exodus 22:2 "If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed.*

And as we have seen already as we have gone through Deuteronomy, it does not apply to accidental manslaughter or to the lawful taking of the life of an enemy combatant during war.

It also covers all of human life, from its inception in the womb to old age. Although it is popular to think of the life of the unborn and elderly as having less value than that of the young and healthy, that is not the opinion expressed in God's word, because young or old, born or unborn, all men have souls and were created by their maker in his image. That fact is what makes murder so wrong.

You see, although we speak of the sanctity of life, it is not life itself that is sacred or holy, it is the fact that man alone among the creatures was created in the image of God and he alone has life or death authority over those whom He created to bear His image. As Christopher Wright points out: "Human beings are made in God's image, an image that no human has the right to destroy without the maker's authority. But God does have that authority. Human life is a gift from God and belongs to God, and no human has the right to destroy the gift or steal what belongs to God."

***Gen. 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man"***

Of course when Israel was brought out of Egypt they were being brought out of a nation that had not held their lives to be inviolable. Out of fear the Egyptians had pursued a policy of murdering the infant boys of the Jews, and had shown in a myriad of ways that the life of Jew was worth far less than the life of an Egyptian. But God does not grade human life, all men are created in his image, and therefore all lives are equally valuable regardless of age, sex, or race. This of course has been denied throughout the ages, as men have enslaved one another, committed genocide to remove those considered subhuman, the Islamic Jihadi for instance is taught that the life of an infidel is no more valuable than that of an ape or a pig, and thus the way is made clear to murder them without remorse. But the principle communicated in our Declaration of Independence is the one contained in the Bible, namely that "***All men*** are created equal in the sight of God."

But it is not just the act of murder itself that is forbidden it is all those fallen passions that lead to it as well. Cain was not walking along in the field one day having a nice conversation with Abel when all of a sudden he picked up a rock and chucked it at his head. No Cain first was jealous of Abel, and then he became angry with him, and then he murdered him. God had warned Cain, that that was where his emotions were leading him and so in essence he told him he had no reason to be angry with his brother and told him to get control of his emotions before they led him into sin:

***Gen. 4:6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?  
7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."***

God does not merely forbid us to murder but also to hate others, to envy them, or to harbor unrighteous anger towards them. Brothers and Sisters, your enemies, the world the flesh and the devil will always be about the business of manipulating your emotions to bring you to sin. Seldom will the devil come to a man and point to someone whom that man bears no ill will towards and say "kill him." But if he can bring that man to ***envy*** another, "why should *he* have that wealth that you and your family don't" he can by stages bring him to hate him. Some of the greatest bloodlettings in human history, the Russian and French revolutions have been caused by the stirring up of envy. And let us not forget that it was envy that caused the high priests and the Pharisees to hate Christ. We are told in Mark 15:10 that even Pontius Pilate knew "*that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.*"

That is the way that Satan operates, he cannot cause us to sin, or drive us into a sin, but he can and he does tempt us offering mythical rewards that never materialize and concealing the curses. That was the way he tempted our first parents Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, “You shall not die... You shall be as God” – All He had to do was work on their envy, their covetousness, their pride. That has been his modus operandi ever since, promising the world to those who will become his slaves, but delivering only the wages of death. *John Whitecross gives another example from history: “Canute, King of England in the eleventh century, promised to make the man who would kill Edmund Ironside, his rival, the highest man in England. Instead of this, when one had performed the deed and expected his reward, Canute commanded him to be hanged on the highest tower in London. Thus too does Satan deal with his servants and assistants.*

Now obviously a lot of people have said, well if I restrain myself from physically murdering another, then I will have kept the commandment *You Shall Not Murder*. Jesus himself told us that murder was something that began in the soul, and once it is formed there it is something we are worthy of being judged for saying:

*Matthew 5:21 " You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, 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!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Jesus also told us something via parable like the good Samaritan that the commandment also instructs us not only negatively not to kill our neighbor, but to love them and do all we can for them

Who can honestly say he has never hated another in his heart or that he has always loved his neighbor and done all that was in his power for them? I can't, can you? You don't need to answer that, I daresay that everyone here has transgressed the true bounds of this commandment. Oh surely not a small child you may say (jealousy, envy, “I want to Kill” example).

So what hope do we have of salvation? Well none by the keeping of the Law.

*Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

*20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

*21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

*22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;*

*23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

*24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

*25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,*

*26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

*27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.*

*28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*