

Exodus 20:13  
The Sixth Commandment, Pt. 3  
"You shall not murder."

Last week, we looked at many of the ways in which a man may be said to murder himself. Today we will be discussing the ways in which a man may be said to murder others.

Now as we have seen, if we are to understand this commandment aright, we will not simply look at it the way that the Pharisees did, and understand it only as forbidding the actual act of unlawful homicide, but will remember that our Lord also included all of the attitudes of the heart that lead to murder. In Matthew 5:21-24 for instance, Jesus in correcting the unbiblical attitudes of the Pharisees stated:

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.

23 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

What is particularly interesting about that is we see that not only does an attitude of hatred or contempt in our hearts towards others constitute a violation of the sixth commandment, it also destroys our ability to offer up acceptable worship to God.

The requirements of the commandments go both ways, inevitably if the vertical relationship with God is wrong, so to will my relationship with my fellow man. I am sure you have seen that yourself, when a man has no peace with God, he inevitably has no peace with his fellow man. Paul reminds us in Romans 1:18-32 that idolatry leads inevitably to sexual immorality and to all sorts of wickedness against one's fellow man *envy, murder, strife*. and so on. In fact, Paul in describing our state prior to coming to faith in Christ reminds us what the fruit of living in darkness regarding Christ was: "we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." (Titus 3:3)

But Christians, do not think that you can allow the horizontal relationship with your fellow man to become corrupted with feelings of hatred, malice, envy, anger and so on without it having an inevitable impact on your vertical relationship with God. No Christian will find himself capable of offering up true heart worship to God in the midst of hating men made in the image of God. Far better, as Jesus says to be "reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matt. 5:24)

This is no new teaching from Jesus, God repeatedly told his people in the Old Testament in Isaiah 1:13 "Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. 14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear." *WHY DOES GOD SAY HE WILL NOT HEAR? "Your hands are full of blood."*

As Brown puts it: "our Lord teaches that, according to the righteousness of His kingdom, having one's mind not subject to the law of justice and love, would render all external religious services unacceptable to God"

So what heart attitudes that constitute acts of murder towards our brothers must we mortify lest we be guilty of violating this commandment?

- 1) **The first is obvious - Anger.** This may be the sudden kind that boils up in an instant and makes Mr. Hand into Mr. Fist, or the simmering kind of hatred that is always cooking. The grudge that we harbor against others that festers away in our souls like some sort of spiritual cancer.

Do not be deceived brethren, this anger is murder and is completely opposed to the rule of love that Christ gives us – 1 John 2:14 **"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."**

- 2) **The second is envy.** In envy we grumble against the providence of God and to enter into an idolatrous desire for something we do not have. Envy played a role in the first murder as Cain envied the fact that his brother Abel's sacrifice was acceptable while his was not. Envy caused Ahab and Jezebel to murder Naboth for his vineyard. Envy has been the cause of more unrighteous murders and wars and revolutions than anything else. Well do the Proverbs say: "A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones." (Prov. 14:30)
- 3) **The third is Revenge.** In desiring to revenge ourselves we put ourselves in the place of God, and idolatrously usurp a power and privilege he has reserved for himself. Romans 12:19 "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord." Do not be deceived when you revenge yourself you are not "doing that which is right" you are repaying evil for evil, something expressly forbidden in Romans 12:17, 1 Th. 5:15, 1 Peter 3:9.

Brethren, particularly guard your hearts here, our culture, like most cultures before it *lauds* revenge. It would be almost impossible to list all the movies that had revenge as their central theme. I think, for instance, that *The Passion of the Christ* is Mel Gibson's first movie where the central character didn't revenge himself upon the people who had done wrong to him and his.

So we have seen how we can break this commandment in the attitudes of our heart towards others. What then are some of the major ways we can break the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment in word and deed?

- 1) **The most obvious of course, is by actually doing unrighteous violence to someone else.** When we intentionally strike them with our hands, or an object, when we stab them, strangle them, shoot them, or whatever we do to harm or hurt them including poisoning or even a withholding of what is necessary for life. Whether I remove the air that a man needs to breathe, or take away his daily bread, if my aim is to do him harm I have broken this commandment.

Here let me address a contentious subject. I could easily preach an individual sermon on this, but at present we will have to be content to touch on it much too briefly.

- a) **Abortion is Murder** – This is both the teaching of scripture and the established position of the Presbyterian Church in America. The Bible teaches that human life begins with conception. This is clear for instance from passages such as Gen. 4:1; Job. 3:3; Psalm 51:5; 139:13–16; Luke 1:24–56 all of which teach that the Bible treats the unborn child as a human being from its conception onward.

The PCA's official position paper on this subject concludes: "The Holy Scripture, which is God's Word written, is graciously given as the power of God unto salvation for those who believe. But it is no less the absolute authority given to regulate any institution or individual as regards the created life which only God has the right to give or take away. On this basis we believe the intentional killing of an unborn child is a violation of God's command and authority. Scripture considers such a child a person and thus covered by Divine protection even as a person after birth. . . . The Bible, especially the Sixth Commandment, gives concrete protection to that life which bears the image of God. . . . That because Scripture clearly affirms the sanctity of human life and condemns its arbitrary destruction, we affirm that the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth, for any reason at any time, is clearly a violation of the Sixth Commandment."

2) **We will talk about this more next week, but I can break it when it was within my capacity to prevent harm from befalling someone and I do nothing to stop it.** Someone has fallen into a lake and is drowning and I pass by doing nothing. A man is bleeding to death by the side of the road and I refuse to stop and help out justifying my actions by saying, "Ah he's probably dead already." The Priest and the Levite who passed by the man who had been robbed and beaten without stopping were breaking the sixth commandment.

I can also by my silence consent to the murder of another, as Pilate washed his hands and consented to the murder of Jesus.

Then there are other less obvious ways I can harm or do violence to another:

Listen to the seven things that it says that the Lord Hates in Prov. 6:16

These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him:

17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,

19 A **false witness** *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

Almost all of those are violations of the sixth commandment, and five of the seven are done in the heart or with words.

***I can be guilty of murdering someone with my words***

- a) **I can murder someone by injuring his name** – I do this when I bear false witness or when I gossip about them. Libel and Slander are violations of both the 9<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> commandments
- b) **I can murder someone by using harsh language towards them and biting words** – not only is this wrong, it is often a provocation to other violations of the 6<sup>th</sup> commandment.

Parents be particularly careful about this, Eph. 6:4 counsels us "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Let us not exasperate our children or our spouses by making harsh, biting, mocking, or sarcastic language the diet they are daily forced to consume.

c) **I can also be more obvious in the way I murder others with the pen.** I can, like David, seek to have others killed as he wrote to Joab to kill Uriah in 2 Sam. 11,

I can murder others by betraying overtly them to the enemy in times of war or persecution  
In this we must follow the example of Christ, who laid down his life for us: 1 John 3:16 **By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren."**

Finally and most importantly, there is spiritual murder –

**Fourthly**, one can furthermore add to this the spiritual murder of his neighbor, which is done by ministers if they do not warn the ungodly ([Ezek. 13:18, 22](#)). This is true when one either brings soul-destructive errors and heresies in vogue or promotes them; gives evil examples whereby others are enticed, deceived, or offended; keeps others away from the Word and the practice of religion; or persecutes and resists others for their godliness.

(1) Such as corrupt others by bad example.

(2) Such as entice others to sin.

(3) Ministers are murderers, who either starve, or poison, or infect souls.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.

(4) Such as destroy others by getting them into bad company, and so make them proselytes to the devil.