

The Sixth Commandment, Pt. 2
The Things Prohibited – Self Murder

Exodus 20:13 " You shall not murder.

There are three men.

The first hates his boss with a passion, all day long he dreams up new ways of murdering the jerk, he fantasizes about poisoning his coffee, running him down while he's jogging with his car, he even goes so far as to think-up ways of disposing of the body without getting caught. But because he's a big coward at heart, he never ever gets past the planning stage.

The second man is an Islamic terrorist, he decides he is going to blow up a bus full of civilians. He constructs his bomb, places it in a bag, boards the bus and presses the switch to detonate the device. However, due to some bad wiring the bomb doesn't go off. He ends up finishing the bus ride without anyone knowing how close they came to being blown to bits.

The third man goes to a bar one evening, he gets mean drunk and in the midst of an argument with an acquaintance over a woman, pulls a knife out of his pocket and stabs him in the heart, killing him instantly.

Now which of these men is guilty of breaking the 6th commandment? I hope you will realize that the correct answer is "all three." When Jesus came to His people, the general trend of Rabbinic interpretation was that only the third who actually brought about the actual death of another was guilty of murder. The Pharisees did this, of course, because they were interested only in Commandments they might actually keep. So they felt free to hate and despise others: especially sinners, saducees, herodians, and upstart Gallileans whilst convincing themselves they were without sin.

Jesus however, preached an entirely different standard:

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, told them that it was not simply the physical act of murder that was a violation of the 6th commandment, but all forms of unrighteous hatred. *All that is opposed to brotherly love and not just murder, violence, and aggression is a violation of the 6th commandment.* Just as we may break the 7th commandment by lusting after someone in our hearts, we may also break the 6th by hating them and wishing them dead there as well.

Now when Jesus taught that there was more forbidden in "You Shall not Murder" than unlawful homicide, he was not introducing something new to the word of God. The Law and the Prophets clearly taught the same standard:

Lev. 19:17 ' You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

18 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Zec. 8:17 Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD

The commandments of God clearly taught we are to love one another, and to do all that we can to avoid harming or hating others. This is as we have seen, because men are created in the image of God, and their life is most precious to him. Had sin not entered into the world, there would never have been death, for there was never supposed to have been a separating of Body of Soul.

Now last week we saw that there were a few, limited categories where the taking of another human life was not a violation of the Law of God, such as Capital Punishment Carried out by the Civil Magistrate, Just War, and Self-Defense when there is no other way of preserving our lives or the life of others from murder.

But now we turn our attention to those things that are clearly prohibited by the 6th commandment. The things that are rightly denominated under the title of "murder."

The first thing we should realize is that one may be guilty of murdering oneself or another and one may contribute to the murder of both body and soul.

Let us turn first therefore to Self-Murder or what is more commonly called suicide, next week we will discuss more abundantly that which is commonly called homicide or the unlawful murder of others. Now I realize that there are many today, who feel that suicide is not murder, and that in fact every individual has a right to take their own life should they wish to. You are probably familiar with the name Jack Kevorkian and his crusade to enable the terminally ill, or in some cases the terminally depressed to take their own lives. You may also be aware that several states, particularly in the west, have groups that have attempted to get assisted suicide legalized.

But this is by no means the first time the Western world has had to deal with philosophical movements endorsing self-murder. As far back as the 18th century, the Scottish Philosopher David Hume was writing treatises that maintained that: **"In the sight of God every event is alike important; and the life of a man is of no greater importance than that of an Oyster" and asking "Where is the crime of turning a few ounces of blood out of their channel?"**

As a Deist of course, Hume cared little for what the revealed word of God said about things, and probably did not care that certainly the God who states that our lives are worth more than many sparrows and who created us in his image, and who knew us before he carefully knit us together in our mothers wombs, regards us as infinitely more important than oysters. ***Think about it brothers and sisters, he did not send his only begotten, well-beloved Son to Die on the cross for shellfish.*** But even Hume's argumentation is sloppy, his reasoning, were it true would not only condone suicide but outright murder. And it shouldn't surprise you that movements towards self-murder, inevitably degenerate into far more than that. There has never, for instance, been a country that practiced Euthanasia, that didn't degenerate into involuntary Euthanasia. So for instance, in Holland patients who don't give their consent are now frequently put to death as well.

This is because once we embrace things like assisted suicide, we inevitably begin to devalue human life. It is no longer sacred and inviolable. It is a commodity whose value is assessed and then bought or spent. Once a life is no longer "worth much" it will quickly be ended, this is particularly the case in countries practicing socialized medicine where every life is eventually computed in terms of its cost or value to the state.

We have no absolute right to take or harm anyone's life, our's or another's for they do not belong to us, they belong to God. In the Bible there are only 3 outright suicides mentioned: Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas. None of them are Godly men, all of them were filled with pride and who had no confidence in God. To kill oneself is the ultimate act of discontent, the ultimate grumbling against God's providence, the ultimate refusal to believe that "all things work together for good to those who love God."

Can suicides also be saved? That question comes up because, while it is rare, there are people who seemed to be sincere Christians here and there who do take their own lives, in answering that I will refer you to what Morton Smith wrote on the subject: **The question of whether a person who commits suicide can possibly go to heaven has been raised. The Bible does not speak of suicide as the unforgivable sin. Of course, one of the basic problems here is that the sin of suicide does not give opportunity for a subsequent act of repentance. If a true Christian can commit the sin, then he must face the fact that his last deed before meeting his Maker was a sin of great enormity. He can only enter the presence of his Maker with the deepest shame. On the other hand, it may be argued that Christ died for the sins of believers before they are committed, even the sin of suicide. If so, then the penalty for that sin has been paid in full. This is not to suggest that we take lightly the sin of self-murder, but it is offered to encourage loved ones of such not to give up in despair. Ultimately our relationship with the Lord rests upon our faith in Jesus as our Savior. Such faith should produce good works, but we all are aware of the fact that it does not produce total perfection in this life. It is conceivable that a Christian might fall into this sin during some period of deep despair and yet be a saved man.**

We should also remember that just as murder does not solely consist in taking a life, self-murder does not solely consist in ending our lives directly. We may be guilty of self-murder by taking no care of ourselves or willfully doing something enormously detrimental to our health. The man who drinks or eats himself to death, has murdered himself just as surely as if he took a little drop of poison each day until the dose became fatal.

The same can be said of many needlessly self-endangering actions, from the 16th-19th century the great example was dueling, which as they rightly put it was the allowing of sinful pride to inevitably produce both a murder and a suicide. Today, all the arguments brought against dueling can be brought against fighting with others over matters of pride, as a kid growing up and attending public school, I never fought an actual duel, but the number of stupid fights I got into the on the playground where without number. It is bad enough when kids do this, but for grown men and women to do it, is far worse. Let us remember that Proverbs tell us: ***Prov. 19:11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression.*** Christian men be always willing to say, as did another Christian gentlemen responding to an invitation to duel, **"I am not afraid of fighting, but I am afraid of Sinning"**

But today, we might add Extremely Stupid Sports, Playing with Crocodiles, and so on. To the degree that we do not take care to preserve our lives we endanger them.

There is also spiritual self-murder, it is all too easy to murder our own souls: Thomas Watson lists five ways in which this commonly happens:

- (1) They willfully murder their souls who have no sense of God, or the world to come, and are past feeling. Eph. 4:19. Tell them of God's holiness and justice, and they are not at all affected.
- (2) They willfully murder their own souls who resign themselves to their lusts, let what will come of it. The soul cries out in you, I am killing myself; I am murdering myself. They "have given themselves over to work all uncleanness with greediness." Eph. 4:19. Let ministers speak to them about their sins, let conscience speak, let affliction speak, they will have their lusts, even though they go to hell for them. " He put it well in saying: For a drop of pleasure they drink a sea of wrath"
- (3) They murder their souls who avoid all means of saving them. They will go to plays, to drunken meetings, but will not set their foot in God's house
- (4) They voluntarily murder their souls who take false prejudices against religion; as if it were so strict and severe that they must live a melancholy life, like hermits and anchorites, and drown all their joys in tears.

In reality, this murdering of your Soul is far worse than the murdering of your bodies. I am sometimes amazed at the lengths men and women will go to, to preserve their bodies and keep them fit, forgetting perhaps that the ship whose brass they are polishing is slowly sinking. They'll pay a fortune for health clubs, undergo all manner of surgery, diet constantly, cover themselves with every manner of concoction, swallow the most foul smelling stuff. But when you ask them about the state of their souls, not even the most elementary exercises are considered. 1 Titus 4:8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

Oz Guinness, the Christian Commentator, once was getting ready to speak at a Christian conference... *Madam, I am English, How fit is your mind? Reflecting on the situation he wrote an excellent book entitled*

"Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It"

Don't let that be the case with you, brothers and sisters. Invest more of your time in improving your soul, attend on the means of grace, be often in prayer. Where would you rather be called home from, the jogging trail or the prayer closet? Your body will go down to the grave someday, but your soul is immortal, and we are called to run a race far more important than the Olympics. Invest your time most on that which lasts forever. As we saw, it is possible to kill your body and not murder your soul. But if you kill your soul, the health of your body is immaterial.

Regardless brothers and sisters, do not slaughter your souls by rejecting your Savior, and do not think that it is too late now to embrace him. As long as there is breath in your body, his salvation is before you:

We then, *as* workers together *with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive **the** grace of God in vain.

2 For He says: "In an **acceptable** time I have heard you, And in **the** day of salvation I have helped you."

Behold, **now is the** accepted time; behold, **now is the** day of salvation.