

Lesson 6

Subduing Anger

Icebreaker:

How were disputes settled in your family when you were growing up?

Introduction:

The introduction to the previous lesson concerned the Law. The laws that were given to Moses can be summarized by the Ten Commandments, which in turn can further be reduced to two: love God and love your neighbor. In reality the whole Law can be reduced to just one word, love.

The Apostle Paul develops that idea in his discourse on law and grace in the epistle entitled Galatians. *“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law”.*¹

Paul also directly links two words in that statement, the Spirit and love. They are one and the same. The Apostle John concurs with this thinking. The gospel of John 4:24 says, *“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* In 1 John 4:8 he further states, *“The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.”*

The disciples received the Holy Spirit after Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. They were filled with God! They were filled with love! The kingdom of God or the rule of God had come to indwell the hearts of men. They received the Spirit because they confessed that Jesus, the Word of God, was the Son of God. The Apostle John sums this up in 1 John 4:15-16. *“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”*

After a person receives the Holy Spirit he is expected to walk in love. *“Be led by the Spirit”* as the Apostle Paul puts it. Individual laws no longer govern him. He is not under the Law of Moses, but under God’s governance. He has received grace, the love of God coming to dwell in him. He is under the Law of the Spirit!

To say that Christians are not under law is an inaccurate and misleading statement. A person not governed by some form of law is lawless. In other words he is a law unto himself doing what is right in his own eyes. Jesus cautioned that in the last days lawlessness would increase and people’s love would grow cold. And the Apostle Paul warned that the man of lawlessness would be revealed, who is the son of destruction. Satan was lawless, he is the destroyer and those who practice lawlessness are his offspring. Christians are to be governed by the Law of the Spirit, therefore, are under obligation to conduct themselves in love.

¹ Galatians 5:13-18

Throughout his discourse Jesus patiently teaches His disciples like young children. He takes what they know and causes them to examine it at a deeper level. Jesus wants them to understand what is behind the Law. What is the spirit of the Law or motive for it? He wants them to listen and learn that they might become expressions of love.

Reading The Scripture:

The Sermon on the Mount **Matthew 5:21-26**

(Gospels forged together into one seamless story, in collaboration with New American Standard Bible,
authored by Michael Gibson, Founder of Spirit & Truth, dba Key 2 Changes: "Follow Me: A Message from God", a journey with Jesus)

You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, '**Raca**,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You **fool**,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent.

Raca - "Worthless" or "Good for nothing".

Fool - The Scriptures say a fool is one who says in his heart, "There is no God". Psalms 14:1

Group Discussion:

1. What is one thing that causes you to become angry?
2. *How long do you normally stay angry?*
3. Who is your brother? Give some examples. (Brothers are those who have either the same father or mother whether by birth or adoption either physically or spiritually)

The Commands:

1. *Leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.*
2. *Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way.*

The Lesson:

Jesus opens this lesson by quoting the sixth commandment, "*You shall not commit murder.*" Some people believe this commandment reads, "Thou shall not kill" and interpret it to mean that no one is justified in taking the life of another. There is nothing wrong if an individual holds this position for himself. However, the Scripture both Old and New Testaments use different words to convey these two ideas. Murder is a wanton act. It is subject to a penalty executed by the government. The penalty may be death itself. Accidentally killing someone is not murder it's manslaughter. Killing someone while defending oneself, family, or property when attacked is not murder, it's self-defense. Warfare itself is not murder; however there can be individual acts of murder occurring within the framework of war depending on the circumstances.

In this lesson Jesus reinforces the concept of individual responsibility. He declares that an individual's actions and motives will be judged and that evil actions have their own penalties.

Jesus exposes the pattern of steps in the commission of murder and their effect on an individual's body, soul and spirit. Then He closes with instructions for the prevention of murder.

Murder is always premeditated. The steps in the process of committing a murder are always the same. In some cases the process happens extremely fast. In the courts these are usually described as "crimes of passion". The murderer has very little time to consider the consequences of his actions. Therefore, the court is usually more lenient in it's sentence. At other times the process develops slowly, giving the murderer time to consider his actions and repent of them. Because this individual continues, willfully and knowingly towards the course of action it is considered premeditated murder and is dealt with more harshly in the courts.

Even in the commission of a murder that is described as a "crime of passion" the individual has rehearsed the steps to committing the murder many times, but stopped short of actually committing it, as we shall see. In that sense it is premeditated. Let's look at the steps in the process that leads to murder. Jesus presents each of them in Matthew 5:22. Warning signs accompany each step in the process and are a result of the failure to overcome sin.

The first warning sign in the process is anger towards someone. According to James 4:1-3 it all starts in the body, a lust of the flesh. *"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."* The individual reasons that justify a person's anger are as varied as the hues of a rainbow. But it boils down to this, "I don't have what I want, therefore I have the right to be angry."

The second warning sign comes when the angry person demeans the other. Jesus used the term "Raca" which means "I spit on you" or "I despise you". The temptation comes through the lust of the eyes. It deals with the mind or soul. The angry person views himself in an exalted position or in one of greater importance than the other. Therefore he has the right to despise the other. James 4:6 and 10 speak to that issue. *"Therefore it says, 'GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.'" "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

The third and final warning that precedes murder is when the angry, despising person accuses the other of being a fool. According to Scripture a fool is not just a silly person, but also one who says in his heart there is no God.² The temptation to accuse or judge comes through the spirit and is called the pride of life. It is the sin of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. The angry, despising person takes on the role of God, being able to judge the hearts of men. Then as judge, he is able to execute a sentence. James 4:11-12 says, *"Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"*

Jesus finishes His commentary by challenging His disciples. They are to take aggressive action in subduing anger in others when the cause for the anger is the disciple's fault. Jesus wants them to be peacemakers. And He wants them to make peace quickly and also to make the wrong right.

² Psalm 14:1

Jesus' first instruction is, *"If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."* The thought is, "Make peace with the person who is angry with you before coming into the presence of God."

The second instruction is to, *"Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent."* Jesus makes three points. First, it is going to cost you either way. Secondly, by making the wrong right by your own volition causes anger to subside and provides opportunity to make friends. If the matter goes before court, the person's anger does not subside and you will not be his friend even when he wins the judgment. Finally, by removing the cause for anger the person will not go on to despise and judge you thus you have kept him from sinning.

Application:

The pattern to murder is clear. Lust produces anger, pride produces despising, and judging produces accusation, which leads to execution. Murder starts with being angry. The Scriptures offer simple practical advice in dealing with it.

1. Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself. (Proverbs 22:24-25)
2. A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)
3. A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression. (Proverbs 19:11)
4. A gift in secret subdues anger, and a bribe in the bosom, strong wrath. (Proverbs 21:14)
5. BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. (Ephesians 4:26-27)