



The Ten Commandments – Part 11
Exodus 20:13
GCSP – 01/02/2010

It has been close to four months since the Holy Spirit interrupted our series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. At that time we were down to the final four so to speak: murder, theft, telling lies, and coveting. I have prayed to make sure that I am not completing this series on my own accord and wishes, but that God wants me to complete it now.

I am chomping at the bit wanting to start the series on the Holy Spirit, but quite frankly I need more time to read through several books the Lord has led me to on the subject. So at this point it looks like the first Saturday in February will be when this series will begin.

But I do not want you to view these last four sermons on the Ten Commandments as anti-climactic or as filler before we get to the good stuff. While it would be easy for all of us to just say to ourselves, "Okay, do not murder, do not steal, do not lie, and do not covet – got that, what's next?" We have to remember how foundational the Ten Commandments are.

Just as Jesus said that all of the commandments and prophets hang on "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself", so too do the all of the other commandments of the Law hang on the Ten Commandments. So, if you can keep the Ten Commandments you will be able to keep the whole Law, just as if you can properly love God and love your fellow man, you will be able to keep the whole Law.

Going back to the point Jesus was making, loving God is, having no other gods before Him; loving God is, not making a graven image and worshipping it; loving God is, not taking His name in vain; and loving God is, remembering His Sabbath. Loving your neighbor is, honoring your father and mother; loving your neighbor is, not committing adultery; loving your neighbor is, not murdering; loving your neighbor is, not stealing; loving your neighbor is, not bearing false witness; and loving your neighbor is, not coveting anything your neighbor has.

And beloved, if we took the time to go over in detail the 600-some other laws contained in the Law of Moses, we would find that all of them are connected with one of the Ten Commandments; meaning, for example, if you obeyed the commandment to not commit adultery, you would be obeying the dozens of other commands that forbid sexual sin of any kind. If you obeyed the command to honor your father and your mother, you would also obey the dozens of other commands that have to do with relationships; and so on.

So do not make the mistake of shutting your mind down or going into snooze mode over these next four weeks. I know the topic of the Ten Commandments may not be as fresh and exciting as it may have been four or five months ago, but it is vitally relevant to our spiritual lives. Because obedience to God and His Word is the key that unlocks every

blessing and every promise contained in the Bible; and God has summed up our obedience in these ten simple laws He laid down for us some four thousand years ago.

I trust I have made my point, because I cannot stress enough how relevant these Ten Commandments are for my life and for your life, right here and right now in the 21st century; these were not just laws given to the Children of Israel at the base of Mount Sinai for them to obey.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of **Exodus**.

Exodus 20:13

Let's pray.

If you were to pick up any major newspaper (and even many small town newspapers), listen to just about any news update on the radio, or watch more than five minutes of any television news report, you will be exposed to one or many murders that have taken place somewhere in our world.

It is estimated that the typical child growing up in the United States will be exposed to tens of thousands of murders depicted in television shows and movies, not to mention the reports of actual murders on the news.

Video games, computer games, and Internet games allow you, your children, and your grandchildren to be the one pulling the trigger so to speak. There are games out there where you obtain points for running over pedestrians with the car you are driving, including little old ladies using walkers and children on the sidewalk. There are games where you can play the role of a deranged former postal employee walking into a post office and blowing everyone away. There are games where you can play the role of disturbed teenager walking into your high school and killing as many students and teachers as you can find. And while I didn't take the time to look, I am sure there are games where you can be a suicide bomber as well.

One game advertises, "Listen to victims moan and beg for mercy. Execute them if they get on your nerves." And we wonder why someone can walk into a school or place of business and randomly start shooting people. We wonder why a mother can throw her 18-month old out the window of her car while driving down the highway. We wonder why gang members can coldly drive by and open fire on a house or playground.

We live in an angry world. We live in a country where civil liberty groups petition for the right for euthanasia and abortion. We have a health bill that is ready to pass where government panels will have the final say on if you get the medical attention you need, or if your life isn't worth the effort and expense – and I know that God controls when you will take your last breath, but you understand my point in regards to how mankind is losing its compassion for the sacredness of human life.

The world's culture has seemingly reached the point of just shrugging their collective shoulders and saying, "That's just the way it is." Life is cheap according to most who hold positions of power and authority in our world today.

So God says, "**You shall not murder.**"

And just to make a quick distinction, there is a vast difference between murder and killing. Murder is malicious and unlawful. God ordains capital punishment and God ordains killing in the course of a righteous and just war; neither of which fall under the category and definition of murder as listed in this Commandment.

So why does God even have to tell us to not murder? – Because God knows that the roots of murder lurks in the human heart. God knows that if it were not for His intervening grace and restraining hand, mankind would have exterminated itself from this planet long ago. It is only by the power of God's love and mercy that He has not allowed things to go that far.

It is the heart that we must look at; because it is in the heart that you and I can make proper application of this command. It is the heart that will show each of us how often we have broken this command in the past and possibly how often we break it still today.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of **Matthew**.

Matthew 5:21-22a

The great problem most of us have with sin is in how we view it. We consider other people as offenders much more than we do ourselves; and we consider it to be sin once the crime has been committed. Jesus would have all of us drastically correct our thinking in regards to when sin is committed. Jesus says the sin is already committed once it enters and is dwelt upon in your heart and mind.

In this regard, anger and hatred directed at a person is the same thing as murder. When your anger toward another person is conceived of and germinated in your heart, the attitude is one of writing that person off. The heart is saying this person does not deserve to remain on this planet; "as far as I'm concerned you are dead." And your heart and mind is in essence saying you would push that person off the edge given the right circumstances and opportunity.

Now I understand how repulsive that may seem to you, and I understand that everything within you is saying, "Well I may get angry at others at times but I wouldn't go so far as wishing them to be dead." Beloved, I understand that. But I am not the one saying this to you, Jesus is. And Jesus doesn't lie. Jesus doesn't haphazardly embellish the truth to make a point. Jesus says you are guilty of murder when you are improperly angry at a brother or sister.

And let me briefly expand on the issue of being improperly angry. The oldest manuscripts for this portion of Matthew, includes the Greek word which would add the phrase "*without proper cause*" immediately after "**But I say to you that everyone who is angry...**" The problem with this, and the possible reason this word was left out by the scribes in the more recent manuscripts, is we would more often than not justify our anger as always having proper cause.

When the prophet Jeremiah tells us that our hearts are "**more deceitful than all else and desperately sick**" (**Jeremiah 17:9**), he is telling us that above all other

applications that our hearts will deceive ourselves. We deceive ourselves much more often than we deceive those around us. We justify our sinful actions and our sinful words and our sinful thoughts constantly. When we tell a lie it was for a purpose. When someone else tells a lie they're a filthy rotten sinner that is in need of repentance.

That being said, there are times when anger is with proper cause, and thus justified. We are simply not usually capable to make the call, so to speak, as to when those times avail themselves. Righteous anger is best defined as being angry at the things that anger God; and knowing what angers God is only accomplished when you are intimately close to Him and His Word, and when you are filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit.

I am afraid that those instances in most Christian's lives are few and far between. The reason for this is that because of the sin of pride, our depraved, selfish, carnal minds believe that God thinks the way we think; so of course the things we are angry about are the same things God is angry about! And we have once again justified our sin.

So we need to leave our pride at the door, or better yet we need to daily eradicate pride from our lives, and realize that the vast majority of our anger is without proper cause. And when that anger is directed at another person we are in violation of God's command that says, "**You shall not murder.**"

1 John 1:8 says, "**If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**" And when we attempt to justify our improper and evil anger we are saying we have no sin, and thus we are void of the truth.

We must always humble ourselves before the Lord, ask Him to reveal our hidden faults, saturate our hearts and minds with His holy Word, and allow the Holy Spirit to dig up the filth and mire that resides within each one of us.

Not a single one of us, and I most obviously include myself, is as good and righteous as we think we are. More often than not we are like the Pharisees, of whom Jesus called whitewashed tombs; clean and freshly painted on the outside but full of decay and stench on the inside. And the remedy is confession and repentance, and the filling and operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives on a moment-by-moment basis.

So improper anger makes you guilty of murder; but Jesus says there is more.

v. 22b

The first offence listed here comes from a Greek word that is very difficult to translate. Some translations just leave the Greek word in and don't bother trying to translate. The word is *Raca*, and the best scholars can do is to tell us it probably means, "good-for-nothing, worthless, or empty-headed one."

In the context of the verse it is flippantly calling someone a disparaging name with slander and malice behind your words. In other words, this isn't jokingly calling someone a dummy in the course of having fun together; this is allowing the vileness in your heart toward another spew out in a hateful expression. This is losing your cool and letting your temper take control of the situation.

The second offence listed in this portion of the verse is commonly translated as calling someone a fool. It can also be defined as calling someone dull or stupid, or calling them a moron.

The Book of Proverbs is full of instances where God, through the pen of Solomon, seemingly calls people fools. The difference is that God is pointing out foolish behavior and/or the characteristics of a fool, while Jesus is pointing at the heart attitude displayed when calling someone a fool; and that is an attitude of arrogance and superiority.

One way that we all tend to reveal this attitude of superiority is in how we view the politicians that do not view things the way we do ourselves. Especially when you go to the extremes of both of our major political parties, they think the other side is completely off their rockers.

I am not ashamed to say that I lean heavily on the conservative side of the political spectrum. Our current administration leans pretty heavily on the liberal end of the spectrum. I have an extremely hard time understanding the liberal way of thinking as I am sure they have an extremely hard time understanding the conservative way of thinking.

Occasionally I get angered over what is going on, and in my heart and mind I vent my anger at President Obama, Nancy Pelosi, and Harry Reid. I can't say I have literally called them fools, even in my mind, but the attitude is there. And the attitude is one of thinking I know better than they do; an attitude of superiority.

Another common way we expose our attitudes of superiority is when we look down upon other Christians who we view as less spiritually mature than we are. We may have a spiritual gift that others do not, or we may not indulge in behavior we view as worldly that others do indulge in.

Now let me make the distinction up front that I am not talking about things that are directly a violation of Scripture; but even then we must be extremely careful of placing ourselves on a pedestal.

For example, how many of you are immediately turned off by the smell of cigarette smoke on a person's clothes, and thus discount anything spiritual they may have to say? I am not saying that anyone should smoke cigarettes so don't view this as justification if you do smoke, but if smoking is a sin it is no more of a sin than having a diet of unhealthy foods; yet most Christians view the two differently.

And because most Christians view cakes and pies and cookies and potato chips differently than cigarettes, we have an air of superiority about us when interacting with a smoker. And again, I am not endorsing or justifying the act of smoking even though both smoking and overindulging in unhealthy foods could possibly be a violation of the Scriptures that talk of caring for our bodies as the Temple of God.

The same could be said for those who avoid cakes and pies and cookies and potato chips, when they are in the company of those who indulge, or overindulge, in these types of foods.

The point is we all have our areas where we fall into the trap of viewing ourselves as superior to someone else simply because they are different than we are in some way. And when you are in that position you are in the category in your heart of calling the person who is different than you, a fool; even if the words never come out of your mouth.

v. 23-24

If you are guilty of the sin of murder in your heart, Jesus say you had best get it confessed and repented of immediately, because even your offerings and sacrifices will not be acceptable to God.

One of our sister Jean's favorite verses of Scripture is **Hosea 6:6**. She likes to quote it out of the Living Bible, which I do not own a copy of, but the New Living Translation gets the sense of it I believe. It says, "**I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices. I want you to know God; that's more important than burnt offerings.**"

The point of that verse and how it ties in with our passage in **Matthew** is that God is much more concerned about the inner person and your relationship with Him than He is with your outward acts of religion. These last few verses we are looking at in **Matthew** depict a person who is doing all the right things on the outside but he has murder in his heart; and Jesus is saying that he is focusing on the wrong end of things.

And it is the air of superiority that will deceive you into thinking everything is okay between you and God simply by doing your spiritual duty of showing up at church and putting a few dollars in the offering basket. Putting the dollars in the offering basket is very important according to God's Word, but doing so apart from a pure heart and a right relationship with God is way down on the list of what is important to God.

We need to first cleanse ourselves through confession and repentance, of the murder that lies in our heart, then we can properly present our offerings to God and expect Him to bless and multiply that offering as His Word promises.

As with all of God's Ten Commandments, when we truly live accordingly in genuine obedience, not only to the letter of the law but to the proper sense and attitude behind the law, we are setting ourselves up for blessing upon blessing and we will be growing more intimate in our relationship with the Lord.

So how do we accomplish this? How do we recognize the deceitfulness of our hearts in this area of our lives?

- Look at everyone you come into contact with as a creation of God; just as you too are a creation of God.

- Realize that no matter how diametrically opposed they are to your way of thinking Jesus went to the Cross for their sins just as much as He did for your sins.
- Every time your flesh starts to lead your thinking down an unrighteous path, go to prayer and ask God to forgive you and to give you His heart for the soul of that person.
- Give the Holy Spirit permission to immediately humble you, even if it is in a publicly embarrassing way, every time you act with an air of superiority.
- Just as you wouldn't think of coming to church without first getting your physical body clean and presentable, never leave the house without the spiritual cleansing of God's Word in your heart. For just as soap and water will cleanse your body, so does the Word of God cleanse your heart.

Let's pray.