



Matthew 5:21-26

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

*Contempt, a feeling of scorn and derision, is the very spirit that ultimately leads to murder. We may have various reasons for not allowing it to be expressed in actual committal of murder. But, alas, we have often murdered one another in mind and heart and thought, have we not? We have nursed thoughts against people which are as foul as murder. There has been this disturbance in the realm of the spirit and we have said of another, "Raca!" Oh, yes, **there are ways in which men can be destroyed short of murder.** We can destroy a man's reputation, we can shake somebody else's confidence in him by whispering criticism or by deliberate fault-finding. That is the kind of thing which our Lord is here indicating, and His whole purpose is to show that all that is included in this commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Killing does not only mean destroying life physically, it means still more trying to destroy the spirit and the soul, destroying the person in any shape or form.*

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

The Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount:

1. To characterize the true nature of a kingdom citizen.
2. To confront people with the righteousness of God.
3. To call people to a life submitted to Jesus, the King.

As the true giver of the Law, Jesus is the best interpreter of the Law. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but rather He came to fulfill the Law and to teach its true implications (5:17-20).

There are six sections in 5:21-48. Each follows a basic pattern:

You have heard... But I say to you... (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43)

The contrast is not between God's Law and Jesus' teaching but between the scribes' interpretation and application of the Law and the true righteousness and intent of the Law as given by God.

	PHARISEES	JESUS
<i>Goal</i>	Avoiding Sin	
<i>Priority</i>	Rules	
<i>Focus</i>	Outward	
<i>Means</i>	My Works	
<i>Result</i>		

THE SCRIBES' INTERPRETATION (5:21)

"You shall not murder" is the sixth commandment (Exodus 20:13). The scribes taught that murder was wrong and warned that the act of murder would result in a person having to face civil judgment.

The main theme [of the Sermon on the Mount] is true righteousness. The religious leaders had an artificial, external righteousness based on Law. But the righteousness Jesus described is a true and vital righteousness that begins internally, in the heart.

—Warren Wiersbe

In every case, Jesus contrasts the people's misunderstanding of the law with the true direction in which the law points, according to his own authority as the law's "fulfiller."

—D. A. Carson

Only citizens of the kingdom, genuine believers, can obey Jesus' commands, doing so not because of outward constraints ("under Law") but because of an inward life ("under grace") enabled by the indwelling Spirit of God.

—Charles H. Spurgeon

The scribes reduced and confined the sanctions with which this prohibition was associated, to mere punishment at the hands of the civil magistrates. They had made it something purely legal, just a matter of the letter of the law.

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

THE KING'S DECLARATION (5:22)

1. *Whoever is angry with his brother [without just cause] shall be in danger of the judgment.*

A Brief Biblical View of Anger:

- Anger can be caused by sin and injustice (John 2:13-17), pride and selfishness (Genesis 4:1-7; Jonah 4:1-11), or fear (1 Sam. 18:8-29).
- Anger as motive does not lead to God's righteousness (Jm. 1:19-20).
- God puts a limit of _____ on our anger (Eph. 4:26-27).
- Anger tends to lead to sin, conflict, bitterness, and foolish behavior (Proverbs 14:17; 15:18; 26:21; 29:11, 22; Eccl. 7:9; cf. Eph. 4:31-32).

2. *Whoever says to his brother, "Raca!" shall be in danger of the supreme court (Greek, Sanhedrin).*

3. *Whoever says, "You fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire.*

THE DISCIPLES' APPLICATION (5:23-26)

"Therefore" points to the application of Jesus' teaching. True love for God and for others is shown in a commitment to reconciliation.

- Reconciliation begins with seeing _____ in hurting others.
- Reconciliation is to be a _____ in my life, even before religious acts of worship (cf. Isaiah 1:10-17; Malachi 2:13-17; Mark 10:28-31; James 3:9-10; 1 John 3:23; 4:20-21).
- Reconciliation should be pursued _____ to prevent bigger problems with bigger consequences (cf. Prov. 17:14).

If it is possible on your part, be at peace with all people. (Romans 12:14)

Angry. Greek, *orgizo*, "brooding, simmering anger, frequently with a view of taking revenge."

Without cause. Greek, *eike*, "vainly, without just cause." This word is in many Greek NT manuscripts but not in some of the oldest ones. It appears to be an added commentary note.

Anger is seldom without a reason but seldom a good one.
—Benjamin Franklin (1706-90)

It is not a sin to be angry but hard not to sin when we are angry.
—John Trapp (1601-69)

Raca sounds like spitting and means 'empty head.' —Chip Bell

Fool. Greek, *moros*, "morally worthless, a scoundrel; a more serious reproach than "Raca" which scorns a man's mind and calls him stupid; *moros* scorns his heart and character" (Vine).

Unrestrained anger is more hurtful to us than the injury that provokes it. —Seneca (5 BC–AD 65)

Resentment is like taking poison and hoping the other person dies.

Our Lord and King restores the law of God to its true force, and warns us that it denounces not only the overt act of killing, but every thought, feeling, and word which would tend to injure a brother or annihilate him by contempt. —Charles Spurgeon

5:26 insists on immediate action: malicious anger is so evil—and God's judgment so certain (5:22) that we must do all in our power to end it. —D.A. Carson