

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

30- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 10  
The King Reveals the Deepest Meaning of  
the Divine Prohibition Against Murder

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Church September 25, 2022

## **Matthew 5:21-26**

**21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'**

**22 "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**

**23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,**

**24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.**

**25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.**

**26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now last week, I told you that what we have here in this *perfect* Sermon- that we call, the “*Sermon on the Mount*” is the *first* of five different Sections of Divine Teaching that Matthew wrote in his Gospel Record- which represent the five Books of Moses in the Old Testament (the *Pentateuch*). And that is because, in addition to Matthew wanting the Jews to see Jesus as being the long-awaited “*Mashich*” (*Messiah*); and the promised “*Immanuel*” (*God with us*)- he wants them to also see Jesus

as being the 2<sup>nd</sup> Moses- Who will bring God's people out from "*spiritual Bondage*" (*Sin*) and lead them into the "*Promised Land*" (*the Kingdom of Heaven*).

So, what this Sermon is illustrating is the Attributes and the Characteristics of the *new* people- that God is raising up; who will inherit this *new* Kingdom of Heaven; which is sovereignly ruled and governed by the *new* King- Jesus Christ- as He ushers in the New Covenant.

So, this Sermon is what this "*new chosen people*" look like- AFTER Jesus has "paid for" ALL of their Sins; AFTER God the Father has imputed to them the Righteousness of Jesus Christ (Justification); and as they are actively and continuously "*killing*" the remaining Sin that is in their Flesh (Sanctification).

And this part of the "*Sermon on the Mount*" has to do with:

### **Jesus illustrating His full Deity- by revealing the deepest meaning of the Law of God**

So, **Matthew 5:21-47** contains six different Sections of infallible Teaching from Jesus Himself. And today we are going to explore what Jesus meant when He taught the people in verses 21-26- about the *full*; *complete*; and *deepest* Meaning of the Divine Prohibition against Murder. And Jesus begins this Explanation by *re-stating* how the Jews had been taught about NOT committing Murder when He said this in verse 21:

**"You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'**

Now notice that Jesus used a very interesting phrase at the *beginning* of verse 21- that we need to fully understand. He said,

**You have heard that the ancients were told...**

Now, by using the word, "**ancients**" here- Jesus was *specifically* referring to those Jews, who lived at the very *beginning* of when the Nation or the Kingdom of Israel was formed. And those people, who lived hundreds of years before Jesus' time "**were told**" about the Prohibition against Murder in two different Ways. In other words, the ancient Jews "**were told**" about this Prohibition against Murder from two different Sources:

1. The Ten Commandments (*Priests and Fathers*)
2. The codified Law (the *Talmud*)

So, the “*ancient Jews*” were *told*; they were *instructed*; or *taught* about the Divine Prohibition against Murder through the Levitical priests from the Ten Commandments that God sovereignly gave to Moses. But they would have *also* been taught by their own Fathers, at home, who were *commanded* by the Law to teach their Children- God’s Law (**Deuteronomy 6:6&7**). And *this* part of the Prohibition was inspired; infallible; and inerrant.

But as Israel became a fully functioning Nation- the Leaders took the Law of God; and they *codified* it into *civil* Law- that helped to explain HOW the people were to obey God’s Command. And so, the ancient Jews had also been taught about the Prohibition against Murder through the “*Talmud*”.

Now the “*Talmud*” is the central text of “*Rabbinic Judaism*” and the primary Source of both Jewish religious Law (*Halakha*) and Jewish Theology.<sup>1 2</sup> Until the advent of “Modernity”, in nearly all Jewish communities, the Talmud was the centerpiece of Jewish “cultural Life” and was foundational to “*all Jewish thought and aspirations*”, serving also as “*the guide for the daily life*” of Jews.<sup>3</sup>

The term, “*Talmud*” normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically, the “*Babylonian Talmud*” (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an *earlier* collection known as, the “*Jerusalem Talmud*” (*Talmud Yerushalmi*).<sup>4</sup> It may also traditionally be called, “*Shas*” (ש"ס), a Hebrew abbreviation of, “*Shisha Sedarim*”, or the “*six orders*” of the “*Mishnah*”.

So, the Talmud had two components:

1. **Mishnah** (משנה, c. 200 CE), a written compendium of the Oral Torah;
2. **Gemara** (גמרא, c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related tannaitic Writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible.

... neither of which was Inspired.

So, the term “*Talmud*” may refer to either the *Gemara* alone, or the *Mishnah* and the *Gemara* together. So, when Jesus said,

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<sup>1</sup> Steinsaltz, Adin (2009). “*What is the Talmud?*”. The Essential Talmud (30th anniversary ed.). Basic Books. ISBN 9780786735419.

<sup>2</sup> Neusner, Jacob (2003). *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. Wipf and Stock Publishers. p. ix. ISBN 9781592442195.

<sup>3</sup> Safrai, S. (1969). “The Era of the Mishnah and Talmud (70–640)”. In Ben-Sasson, H.H. (ed.). *A History of the Jewish People*. Translated by Weidenfeld, George. Harvard University Press (published 1976). p. 379. ISBN 9780674397316.

<sup>4</sup> Goldberg, Abraham (1987). “*The Palestinian Talmud*”. In Safrai, Shmuel (ed.). *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud, Volume 3 The Literature of the Sages*. Brill. pp. 303–322. doi:10.1163/9789004275133\_008. ISBN 9789004275133.

**You have heard that the ancients were told, YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER...**

... He was referring to what God gave to Moses in **Exodus 20:13** when He said,

**You shall not murder.**

... but the part where Jesus said,

**... Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.**

... was NOT given by God to Moses but was developed much later as the Jews wrote down the Way in which the Divine Prohibition against Murder would be handled in Jewish Law Courts.

So, the *first* phrase was given by God Himself in the Ten Commandments and is Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible- Absolute Truth; while the *second* phrase is Man's Effort at codifying the Way in which the Divine Prohibition against Murder would be adjudicated by the Legal System in Israel.

So, the *first* phrase was a Divine Revelation of God while the *second* phrase was developed over time by Man. But BOTH were taught to the people- and the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century would have been familiar with both- which is why Jesus included both in His Teaching.

So, what exactly is Jesus doing here? He is illustrating to the *new* people; who will inherit the *new* Kingdom of Heaven by Faith alone in Jesus and in His finished Work what the "*Righteousness*" that *exceeds* the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees looks like. Remember back in verse 20- Jesus said,

**For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

... and so, with the next six Statements by Jesus (verses 21-47)- He is illustrating what that "*higher Righteousness*" looks like.

But we also have to understand that, over the Centuries, the Jewish Leaders had taken the inspired; inerrant; and infallible Divine Absolute Truth of the Old Testament Scriptures- and they had added to them and taken from them- through their own writings. And they did this to the point where what God actually said in Scripture was sometimes- completely unknown by the people.

And this is what ALL false Religions do. They take the simple but profound Truth that God spoke in either the 39 Books of the Old Testament or the 27 Books of the New- and they mix it up with their own “*human wisdom*”; and ideas and Teachings- to the point where the Command of God becomes so convoluted; so hideous; and so complicated that it would take a lawyer to figure it out. And that is what the religious Leaders had done to the six Subjects that Jesus is dealing with in verses 21-47.

Now the NASB95 version of the English Bible<sup>5</sup> is of great Help here- because they always put the Divine Revelation from the Old Testament in all capital letters while they leave the part that Man developed in regular letters. So, at the end of verse 21 where Jesus said,

**... Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.**

... He was NOT talking about the “*Judgment of God*”- which had already been spelled out in **Genesis 9:6** as “*Capital Execution*”.

So, in the *first* part of verse 21- Jesus was telling this group of Believers that, over the Centuries, they had been taught CORRECTLY-by the Law of God in **Exodus 20** about the Divine Prohibition against Murder. But in the *last* part of verse 21- Jesus is telling them that they had also been taught INCORRECTLY by the religious Hypocrites that if they committed Murder- they would have to go before the “*Court of Law*” which would then- “*try them*” for this terrible Crime.

But even though the *first* part of verse 21 was the CORRECT Teaching from God about the Prohibition against Murder- over the Centuries (due in part to the False Teaching by the Pharisees)- the people had lost the full Meaning BEHIND the Prohibition. And that is why at the beginning of verse 22- Jesus said,

**But I say to you ...**

... which is an amazing Statement because it means that what Jesus is going to teach next- is the *best* and *deepest* Meaning of the simple but profound infallible Command of **Exodus 20:13** that Moses wrote as he was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit about 1,450 years before Jesus was born that says,

**You shall not murder.**

So, Jesus is acting as though He actually Authored the Original Commandment back in **Exodus 20** (which He did). And then Jesus said in the rest of verse 22:

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<sup>5</sup> At the date of this Sermon- the NASB95 is THE most accurate English version of the Bible available.

**... that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**

Now at first glance- I would think that the first Question would be, “*Why does **Exodus 20:13** need any explanation at all? Isn't this a very straightforward Statement: '**You shall NOT murder**'?*”

And this is where going back to the original Hebrew is of great Help- because, for example, the King James Version renders **Exodus 20:13** as,

**Thou shalt not kill**

... which has caused the average Believer all sorts of problems for hundreds of years- precisely because this is NOT what Moses wrote. Moses did NOT use the Hebrew word for “*Killing*” in this verse- he used the Hebrew word for “*Murder*”. So, this is simply a lousy translation of what God spoke to Moses in the King James Version. Because the literal Hebrew says,

**lo tir'tsahh...** which in English is literally,

**NOT *you~will~*MURDER**

So, from the very beginning, God inspired Moses to write down the word, “*Murder*” and NOT “*Kill*”. And this is very important because there are several different *kinds* of “*Killing*”- *some* of which are not even *illegal*- much less *sinful*. But even though Moses wrote the Hebrew word for Murder- we have to acknowledge that there are several different “*kinds*” of Murder- including

- 1<sup>st</sup>; 2<sup>nd</sup>; and 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Murder
- Felony Murder
- Involuntary Manslaughter
- Voluntary Manslaughter

... where the distinction between them involves aspects such as:

- Planning

- Intent
- Whether an instrument was used (i.e. car; gun, etc.)

Now the Main Purpose behind God's Prohibition against Murder is to illustrate the Value that God Himself places on Human Life. Man was originally made in the Image and Likeness of God- and we are the ONLY part of Creation of which that is true. Dogs; Trees; Birds; Horses; and Fish were also created by God- but they have NO capacity to Know God; Love God; or to Enjoy God forever. Now it is true that all of Creation worships and glorifies God. But that is true- ONLY in the sense that they do what they were created to do- and in that way- they honor and bring Glory to God.

But Man has the capacity to actually "Know" God; and to "Love" Him; and to actually "Enjoy" God. And so, our Worship of God is on a much *higher* Plane than any other part of God's Creation. And that means that God is glorified the MOST when a sinful human Rebel comes to know; love; and enjoy God- precisely because of what God alone has done for him. Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote about how God receives Glory from us in **1Corinthians 11:3-10**:

**3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.**

**4 Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.**

**5 But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.**

**6 For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.**

**7 For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.**

**8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;**

**9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.**

**10 Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.**

So, all of Mankind is a *unique* Creation of God and is commanded to give God Glory- in various Ways. And that means that Human Life is a Gift from God.

**Genesis 2:7**

**Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**

**Job 33:4**

**The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.**

**Psalms 139:13-16**

**13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.**

**14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.**

**15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;**

**16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.**

But that also means that **ONLY** God has the Right to kill a Man; or to *direct* the killing of a Man. God chose to sovereignly give that person the “*Gift of Life*” to begin with and therefore, He is the **ONLY** One, Who can take that Life away; or direct the ruling Authorities to do so (*Capital Punishment*). But the *intentional* Murder of Human Beings is so wrong and so sinful- that it earns the most *severe* Punishment: Death. Look what God Himself said in **Genesis 9:6**:

**Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.**

Now many teach today that what God’s Word says here about “*Capital Punishment*” has been done away- because of Jesus bringing in the New Covenant which fulfilled the Ceremonial and Dietary parts of the Law of Moses. But what they forget is that the entire **Book of Genesis** has **NOTHING** to do with the Law of Moses. The Acts and Statements made in **Genesis** occurred over 4 Centuries *before* Moses was even born. So, this frightening Punishment for intentional Murder is still on the Books for us today.

But aside from that- the early Church recognized that the Value of **ALL** Human Life is so great that much Thought and Prayer went into developing the “*Doctrine of Just War*”- which teaches that the **ONLY** War in which Christians may fight and intentionally kill (murder) the “enemy”; and **NOT** be sinning- is the War that passes the Test of being “Just”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Part of this Doctrine is that **ALL** War is Evil. But Christians may fight and kill in War- they may involve themselves in the great Evil of War- but **ONLY** because- if they do **NOT** fight and kill- an even **GREATER** Evil will come about- that would **NOT**



The “*Doctrine of Self-defense*” is another Situation where intentionally killing another person is not only NOT sinful- but is actually a godly thing to do. For example, for a man to take the Life of another Human Being in order to protect his Wife or Children or even his Property is allowed in the Bible- under certain Circumstances (**Exodus 22:2&3**).

And that Divine Allowance for “*Self-defense*” is the logic behind an important Exception to the Horror of Abortion. If the Woman’s Life is in legitimate Danger- she may kill the Life that is within her- without being Guilty of Sin- precisely because she was acting in her own “*Self-defense*”. Now that doesn’t mean she HAS to kill the baby- many choose not to- but she may and remain in Right Standing with God.

What is NOT allowed, however, is the intentional Murder of babies not yet born because of Convenience; or economic Considerations; or because raising the baby might be difficult. We should encourage scared Women to allow the baby to be adopted rather than murdered- if that Mother simply can’t (or won’t) have the baby.

But when Jesus began verse 22 by saying,

**But I say to you...**

... He then went about to give the *deepest* and *best* Meaning of what God intended in the very Beginning when He first *imposed* that moral Law.

And Jesus said that the *deepest* Meaning behind the Divine Prohibition against Murder had to do with the condition of the Human Heart- and NOT the visible and external Act of Murder itself. So, Jesus said,

**But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.**

Here Jesus gave three Illustrations concerning the Heart Condition called, “*Anger*” against a fellow- bond-slave of Jesus.

1. Anger with another Brother
2. Saying, “*You good-for-nothing/ Raca*”
3. Calling another Brother a “*fool*”

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have come about- had the Believer fought and killed.

... and in each case- the Punishment grows more severe.

Now it is at this point where the King James Version made another tragic translation error. In the first part of verse 22- the KJV translators wrote,

**... whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment ...**

Now please don't get angry with me- but the phrase, "**without a cause**" was NOT in the original Autograph that Matthew actually wrote. And that is NOT my Opinion- it is a fact. And all you have to do- is to do your own research- and you will find out that what I just said is true. So, the NASB95 took that phrase out- because it NEVER should have been in there to begin with.

So, in verse 22- Jesus is condemning being angry with a brother. But wait a minute! Sometimes, it is *warranted* to be angry with even a brother in Christ. Sometimes a brother will do something that *deserves* our Anger. So, this is NOT condemning ALL Anger. It is condemning *unresolved* Anger; or Anger that remains over an Issue that has already been dealt with and was supposedly forgiven and "put under the Blood".

So, while the Law of God condemned the physical; external; and visible Act of the *intentional* killing of another person (Murder)- the *deepest* and *best Meaning* of that Prohibition was to condemn the Sin of "*unresolved Anger*" against another person.

Now our Culture has watered- down the seriousness of this. And even many within the modern Church have helped in watering this Divine Prohibition down- so that it doesn't appear to be that big of a deal. And so, they call it, "*Holding a Grudge*".

Now many would say that "*Holding a Grudge*" against somebody is not a "Good" thing; and a few would even go so far as to counsel against harboring that Grudge. But few, if any would simply repeat what Jesus said in the first part of verse 22:

**But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court ...**

... so, "*Holding a Grudge*" is really all about the "*Sin of Unforgiveness*". So, Jesus said we are Murderers if we have "*unresolved Anger*" against them; or if we "*hold a Grudge*" against another Blood- bought saint of God; or we have "*Unforgiveness*" in our heart.

So, when we perceive that a brother or sister in Christ has "*wrong*

*us*”- **even if it isn’t actually true**- and we hold on to that “*Unforgiveness*” and let it fester inside of us and we allow it to get bigger and bigger- the Bible teaches that we are committing Murder against that other person.

So, having “*Unresolved Anger*” in our Heart and Mind; or “*holding a Grudge*”; or walking in “*Unforgiveness*” toward another Brother or Sister in Christ- *qualifies* us as being a “Murderer” of that person- in God’s eyes. But we must go even further because the Apostle John was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to say this in **1John 3:15**:

**Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.**

So, what Jesus is doing here- is teaching us a biblical Principle about ourselves. Jesus is teaching us that what will condemn us before God- is what is going on INSIDE of us. You see, as fallen creatures of the dust- we have the capacity to actually hate someone and despise everything about them- and yet make our outward appearance look friendly. So, we smile at them; and put on an outward show of kindness; or love; or fellowship- that doesn’t actually exist. Because in our Mind and in our Heart- we “*hate*” that individual. We “*despise*” them. We are actually seething in our hypocritical and unreconciled Anger and Unforgiveness toward that other person. And at that point- Jesus said we are a Murderer.

Now it is very easy for lost people to think well of themselves- and even go so far as to think they are saved- simply because they haven’t done the *worst* thing imaginable to others- like murder them. But here, the Apostle John equates the “*Sin of Hate*” with the “*Sin of Murder*”.

But even with that- many, who *say* they are saved, respond to this infallible Statement by the Apostle John by saying something flippant like, “*I don’t hate anyone- I just don’t want anything to do with them!*”- *wrongly* thinking that if they do not actively wish or plan someone’s Harm- then they are not guilty of the “*Sin of Hate*”. So, what they have done is to define the word, “*Hate*” in a way that allows them to escape the Conviction of the Holy Spirit and that allows them to hold on to that Grudge or that Unforgiveness.

But let’s do what we tell others to do and allow the Bible to interpret itself. So, let’s go back to **1John** and see what the Context was concerning the Statement equating “*Hate*” with “*Murder*” in **1John 3:15-18**:

**15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.**

**16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**

**17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

**18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.**

Here we see that John is contrasting the Concept of “*Hate*” with the Concept of “*Love*”. And this particular “*Love*” is Love for the “*Brethren*” not simply the mystical, esoteric, vague, and emotional Concept of Love- that has no defined Object of that Love. And the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches that our Love for the Brethren MUST be constant; deep; and sacrificial.

And that means that we could see the Sin of “*Hate*” as being us loving someone LESS than what John talked about here. So, we may very well love them- but ONLY on some superficial and distant level. But we certainly do NOT love them constantly; nor deeply; nor sacrificially.

So, because of what John says here- we also see that the notion that “*Hate*” is defined ONLY by actively *wishing* or *planning* someone Harm- is NOT correct. In this Passage- we see that simply “*not caring*” for another Believer- is defined as “*Hate*”. So, being “*unconcerned*” for the welfare of another Believer; or “*not caring*” what that person is going through and thus not offering any Prayer or Encouragement; or being completely “*apathetic*” toward another son or daughter of the Lord Christ- is classified in the New Testament as being the “*Sin of Hate*”. And that means that those guilty of “*hating*” others like this- are classified by God the Holy Spirit as being a “*Murderer*”!

So, here with John- “*Hate*” is defined as NOT loving another brother in “*Deed and Truth*” as well as in “*Word or with Tongue*”. And then John gave an inspired and infallible Example of what he was talking about in verse 17:

**... whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

... and the Answer is, “*The Love of God does NOT abide in a person who does this!*”

But if the “*Love of God*” does NOT abide in that person- what DOES abide? “*Hate*”! And if “*Hate*” abides in the heart of that individual- the Bible says he is a “*Murderer*”. And John makes a very serious Statement about that at the end of verse 15:

**... no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.**

... which means that person is NOT saved!

Now we must always remember that when we see verses like this- we are NOT looking at infallible Teaching that says that genuinely saved people can *lose* their Salvation if they are guilty of that particular Sin. That is NOT what verses like that are teaching us- even though MANY within the modern church think so.

What we are seeing is the Truth concerning our understanding about our own Salvation. You see, because we are fallen creatures- we have an *enormous* Capacity to be deceived. So, in His Mercy, God placed verses like this in the Bible to reveal to us the Truth about ourselves.

I have been saved for over 51 years. And I have NEVER met the first person in Church, who freely admitted to me that they were Lost and Unsaved. EVERYBODY *says* they're saved- even though many of them probably aren't.

But the Solution is NOT for me to get into an Argument with them about the Condition of their Soul. The Answer is to allow God's perfect Word to reveal to them- who they really are.

So, when John says things like this- He is NOT saying if saved people do this or are guilty of this- then they lose their Salvation. Instead, John is saying that genuinely saved people will NOT have Hate in their heart against *anyone*. And that means when they recognize that this kind of Hate has set up shop in their Mind and Heart- they will cry to God for Forgiveness and for Power to evict that sinful Attribute from them.

But this also means that if these godly Attributes are missing; or if these particular Sins are present in the Life of an individual and abound; or if these Sins are present without being convicted of them; and without a striving to overcome them; or if these Sins are in a person and he simply ignores them- thinking that since he is saved- it doesn't matter if he is guilty of this- then there is Evidence to suggest that he might be deceived about his Salvation Experience- and may not have ever been saved in the first place.

You see, it is true that saved people sin. And, sometimes, saved people sin *grievously*. That isn't the Issue. The Issue is: "*What is that person doing about their Sin?*" As we found out last week- it is because Jesus DID "pay for" ALL of our Sins and because we ARE saved- that we go about- in the Name of Jesus; and in the Power of the Holy Spirit; and in the Love and Grace of God; and to God's Glory- we go about then to daily "kill" the remaining Sin that we see is in our Lives. Or as the Apostle Paul said in **1Corinthians 15:31b**:

... I die daily.

And so, those who are *actively* and *purposefully* striving to “kill Sin” in their daily lives- are the ONLY ones, who have had ALL of their Sins “paid for” by Jesus. Those who are resting comfortably in the Knowledge that Jesus has “paid for” ALL their Sins and THEREFORE- they have no Desire; or they sense no Duty; Obligation; or Joy to obey the Words of the Bible to “kill” the remaining Sin that is in their daily Lives- are deceived about their Salvation experience and remain Unsaved!

So, John says we are guilty of the “*Sin of Hate*” (and are a Murderer)- and we are loudly testifying that we do NOT have “*Eternal Life*” abiding in us- and we are NOT saved- NOT merely when we actively wish or plan Harm to someone else- but when we:

- See a brother in Need
- Close our Heart against him

Or we could use the Example that Jesus gave in **Matthew 5:22**. Here Jesus gives three natural examples of what the “*Sin of Hate*” looks like when we are guilty of it:

1. Everyone who is angry with his brother
2. Whoever says to his brother, “*You good-for-nothing!*”
3. Whoever says [to his brother], “*You fool!*”

So, by Jesus saying, “**But I say to you...**” and then by giving these three Examples- He was *categorically* teaching that when God gave Moses the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment almost 1500 years earlier- “*You shall NOT Murder*”- that, *in addition to* the *physical* Act of taking another Human Life- *intentionally* (Murder)- He had in Mind the *belittling*; and the *condescending*; and the *minimizing* the inherent Worth and Dignity of another Human Being.

So, in the Divine Prohibition against Murder- NOT ONLY are we *forbidden* to intentionally take another Human Being’s Life (with the notable Exceptions); and NOT ONLY are we *forbidden* to Hate another human being; and NOT ONLY are we *forbidden* to close our heart against a Brother in Need; But we are also expressly forbidden by God to even *belittle* or *minimize* the inherent God-given Worth and Dignity of that Person, who was made in the Image and Likeness of God!

Now the King James Version used the term, “*Raca*” in verse 22; while the NASB95 has translated that Greek word as, “*You good-for-nothing*”. So, if we say

to another Brother, “*Raca!*” or “*You good-for-nothing!*” we will have to appear before something that Jesus called, the “*Supreme Court*”.

Now the word, “*Raca*” was an insulting slang word or even a curse word that people in the ancient world used to *belittle* another person. Some theologians have said it means “*brainless Idiot*.” Others have said it means “*worthless Fellow*”; “*silly Fool*”; “*empty Head*”; or “*Blockhead*”.

But what it is- is a verbal expression of Slander against the person. And it is directed toward his “*Personality*”; or toward something in his “*Character*”; or something in his “*Looks*”. So, it is a word of arrogant Contempt. It is a word of Despising.

So, this is where you are condemning WHO a person is- and NOT WHAT they have done. And by condemning WHO a person is- you have actually slandered God- Who made that Person in His Image and Likeness.

Now I realize that this is very common in our Culture. We talk like this all the time. We call other people, “*Idiots*” and “*Fools*”- *especially* if we are talking about people, who are in Politics. But I also realize that Jesus said this was Sin. And so, as believers in the Lord Christ; and as people who are actively seeking God’s Will in our Lives; and as people, who are striving to be Holy because God is Holy; and as people who seek to kill the remaining vestiges of Sin in our daily lives- we simply CANNOT talk like this! We just can’t! So, we need to repent and turn from this Sin.

Again, the Point here- is that it is fine to say, “*You are ACTING foolishly*” or “*You’re ACTING wrongly*”; or “*You’re trying to DO SOMETHING that is foolish*”- because then you are addressing WHAT they are doing- and NOT WHO they are. But Jesus said here that when we attack WHO a person is- we are actually attacking God, Who made that Person in His Image and Likeness. And that is NOT okay.

You see, attacking WHO a Person is- would *prohibit* us from loving them. It would hinder us from forgiving them. And it would stifle us praying for them. And so, Jesus says that we simply CANNOT attack WHO a person is. And that is true- EVEN WHEN THEY ARE OUR ENEMIES AND ARE FIGHTING AGAINST GOD! Because attacking WHO they are- makes them “*inhuman*”; and that *devaluing* of their “*Personhood*” makes it *easier* to hold a Grudge against them; or to walk in Unforgiveness; or to simply not care about their Welfare. But Jesus said that the Punishment for saying or even thinking this about another Human Being is us having to go before the “*Supreme Court*”.

Now I’m really NOT sure what Jesus meant by the term, “**Supreme Court**” here because the Jews didn’t have one. But He may have been talking about the Sanhedrin Court- which was the HIGHEST Court in Israel during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century.

The third example is when we say to another Person, who has been made in the Image and Likeness of God, “*You fool!*” And Jesus said when we talk that way to another Human Being- who has been made in the Image and Likeness of God- we have belittled his Humanity as low as we can. And that means we have *earned* the “*Fiery Hell*”!

Another very simple Way of looking at this- is that unless we love others to the SAME *degree* and with the SAME *intensity* that we love *ourselves*- we are guilty of Murder! And yes, that includes our Enemies as well.

So, it is simply NOT enough that we *refrain* from intentionally killing another person- we MUST *actively* and *purposefully* love them! And *part* of loving them- is that, in addition to NOT Hating them; in addition to NOT closing our heart against them- we MUST also *actively*; *purposefully*; and *joyfully* love them and treat them with the Dignity and Respect that a fellow “*Image-bearer of God*”- deserves!

Now many would ask, “*Why is Jesus brining this up at this point in His Ministry?*” The Main Reason is because He is drawing a very clear distinction between the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees and the new people of God- BECAUSE THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES WERE TALKING AND THINKING LIKE THIS! They DID condemn WHO a person was. They DID ATTACK people on a personal level. They DID hate others. And they DID simply not care about others. And so, once again, by teaching us to NOT do this- Jesus is illustrating the “*Righteousness*” that exceeds the “*Righteousness*” of the Scribes and Pharisees! Now please read verses 23&24 again with me:

**23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,  
24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.**

Now the “*Altar*” in mind here is where the animals were slain and offered in their Old Covenant Sacrifice. And this is another Example of Jesus honoring the Law that God gave to Moses- even though He is going to *fulfill* that portion of God’s Law through His Own Death and *abolish* Animal Sacrifices (and the ALTAR) forever. But before His Resurrection- Jesus told the new people, who would inherit this new Kingdom that being in Right Standing with your Brother- is MORE important than offering a Sacrifice to God.

The New Covenant FORBIDS disunity between Believers. The New Covenant gives NO allowance for brothers and sisters in Christ to exist in Right Standing with God while harboring ill-will toward each other. NONE! IT SIMPLY CANNOT BE DONE! It is “*Anathema*” to our soul! So, instead of



pretending that ALL is Well between you and God- if – right in the middle of offering an animal to God- you remember that your brother has ought against you- you leave the animal sacrifice and go and be reconciled to your brother FIRST. And then offer that sacrifice!

Okay- but what is the equivalent after Animal Sacrifices were abolished because of Jesus' Death? Do NOT try to worship God- without FIRST being reconciled with your brother. Do NOT sing praises to God; do NOT raise your hands; Do NOT take the Lord's Table; Do NOT read the Bible; Do NOT tell others about Jesus; Do NOT pray to God- UNTIL you and your brother are reconciled! In other words, when you and your brother are out of sorts- God isn't receiving your Worship anyway. So, go and be reconciled with your brother FIRST before you do any of the things that classify as "Worship".

And this speaks to the ONE; HOLY: UNIVERSAL: and APOSTOLIC Attributes of the Church that Jesus is building and over which He is HEAD. There is NO Schism; NO Division; NO Grudges; NO Unforgiveness; NO Hate; and NO Apathy in that Church! None! The Apostle John infallibly wrote this in **1John 4:20&21:**

**20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.**

**21 And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.**

... so, when we see that this amazing Love for each other has dwindled or is being challenged; or is growing dim- BEFORE we worship God- we MUST be reconciled to each other! Now let's read verses 25&26 again:

**25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.**

**26 "Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.**

Now in these verses- Jesus is using an old, *legal* Method of dealing with debtors in Jewish Society. And the idea is that you're worshiping God and you remember that you've got a Debt. And your Debt has gotten so out of balance that you're actually being dragged into Court over this Debt. And this is a very important thing. And the key on it is in verse 25,

**Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way...**

... in other words, *“Do this Immediately! Now!”* I mean you’ve already left your Animal Offering to be reconciled to your brother. So, while you’re at it- go be reconciled with your Creditors as well. And then you can offer God- **“CLEAN WORSHIP”**.

And do it- NOW! Because now is Time for Reconciliation. Why? Because tomorrow maybe too late. That is the implication. Because if you don’t pay your Debt- you’ll be cast into Prison; and you’ll have to be stuck there without the possibility of ever paying back that Debt, and it’ll be too late.

But notice that the Lord focuses here on the guilty party. In verses 23 and 24 He’s saying, essentially, you’re there at the Altar- offering your Animal Sacrifice. And as you’re doing that- you remember that somebody hates you; or somebody is angry with you. But here in 25&26- Jesus is talking about the factor of Guilt. Now there may be Guilt on both sides, but the guilty party is in view here- if it’s both or if it’s one.

So, in essence, Jesus is saying, *“Settle your case out of Court as fast as you can.”* That’s what He’s saying. Don’t let this Debt thing continue and continue until you’re on your way to debtor’s Prison- because if that happens- you may never be able to pay it back. That’s what He’s talking about. Settle your Issues out of Court- FAST!

You see, in Jewish Law- when a man was adjudged Guilty and he was adjudged to be the Debtor, he was handed over to the Court Officer, (and the Greek word has to do with the *“bottom rower”* on a military ship- in **Luke 12**). So, he’s handed over to the Court Officer, and that guy tries to exact from the individual the Payment to the Creditor. The Adjudication says that this man has to pay this other man so much. And the Court Officer tries to get the money. And if he can’t get the money- he takes the man who defaults, slams him in Prison, and he has to stay in Prison till he can pay it back.

The point to all of this is if you’re in Prison, you can’t ever pay it back. Can’t be done. So, you will probably stay in Prison forever. So, Jesus is saying, *“Settle it out of Court. Reconcile before you are cast into Prison.”*

But why is Jesus talking about this here? Does He mean that the time will come when the person will die; and you’ll never be able to reconcile? Does He mean the time will come when God will chasten you and judge you, and it’ll be too late? Possibly both of those things. Jesus didn’t get into any more detail here. And that means that they knew what He was talking about.

But what we DO know is that the Scribes and Pharisees NEVER paid back the Debts they owed. They fleeced the people and commanded money from them.

But they NEVER paid it back. So, once again, this is illustrating the “Righteousness” that *exceeds* the “Righteousness” of the Scribes and Pharisees.

But the Main Point here is that this *new* people; who will become “Righteous” by Faith alone in Jesus; and who will inherit this *new* Kingdom of Heaven- these TRUE Jews (**Romans 2:28&29**)- will NOT be like the Scribes and Pharisees. And they will NOT try to Worship God unless their Relations with other people (Both inside and outside the Camp) are Correct. So, hurry, hurry and make them right. Don’t let them get to the place where there will be a civil Judgment made and somebody loses badly in the end.

So, not allowing you to be distant from your fellow-believers over an Issue- that is what Jesus is talking about here. Don’t let it get too far. Don’t let it get to the place where God comes in Judgment against you. Act before then.

And I believe in the final analysis, Jesus is saying that God is the real Judge, and Hell is the real Punishment. And if you don’t make things right, you may find yourself in an eternal Hell with a Debt that never could be paid. So, who is a Murderer? Ask yourself, “*Who is a Murderer?*” Have you ever been angry with another Brother? You ever called anybody a name? Maybe your wife or husband or child? Somebody under your breath? Have you ever cursed anybody? Have you ever come to church to worship while you had bitterness in your heart? Such Hypocrisy! Have you ever had a Grudge with somebody; and you dragged it all the way to the Court; and you never settled it?

Then Jesus says you’re the same as a Murderer because you allowed Conflict, Bitterness, Hatred, Anger, and Apathy to enter into your heart.

And now, the second Question, “*Who deserves Death and Hell?*” You do. I do. We ALL do! We’re ALL guilty of Murder- unless we have loved our neighbor- perfectly! We’ve ALL sinned and come short of the Glory of God. And the Wages for our Sin is what? Death! And so, you say, “Well, how do we escape? I mean if we’re all Murderers and no Murderer has eternal Life in him; and no Murderer will inherit the Kingdom; if we’re ALL Murderers; and we ALL deserve Death and Hell- then how do we escape? I mean we’ve ALL worshiped in Hypocrisy. We’ve ALL been angry. We’ve ALL said malicious things. We’ve ALL thought a curse, or said a curse. We’ve ALL been unreconciled to a brother. We’ve ALL stop caring. We’ve ALL done that. So, what are we going to do?”

And that is *exactly* what Jesus is after. He wants to drive them to the fact that they CANNOT be righteous on their own. And that will drive them to their knees at the Foot of the Cross to cry out for Mercy to receive the imputed Righteousness that only Jesus Christ can give. So, everything that He says here is to drive them to Frustration and Inadequacy- so they will come to Him- in Desperation.

Jesus died our Death! He entered our Hell that we might have Righteousness! You and I deserve Death! You and I deserve Hell! We're ALL Murderers! That's the Point! All the Pharisees were, the Scribes were- but we are too! Everybody is! And because that is true- Jesus went to the Cross; He died our Death; suffered our Hell; and now He offers us the Gift of His Own Righteousness! And that's the meaning of the Gospel!

So, we are brought again to the Fact that by the Deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified. But the Righteousness that we desperately need comes as a Gift from God. And that is NOT what the Scribes and Pharisees were chasing. Paul calls it "*The Righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to us.*" And it *exceeds* what the Scribes and Pharisees had.

Amen. Let's pray.

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