

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 78

October 30, 2020

Section 54 The Sermon on the Mount

A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

Welcome to another edition of the Mind of Christ. We are glad to have you again. We have been making our way through the words of Jesus and the actions of Jesus, and everything He's done. We're trying to determine how He thinks, what is His mind and how do we ascertain the thought processes of Jesus so that we can imitate Him even in that level of our lives. It's a very challenging event which is why we call it "Challenger Deep" ... the deepest part of the ocean. The mind of Christ is very deep and we have been plunging into it over the last several months, and years for me. I started this journey back in 2010, and what you are getting is some very raw material of the study that I did. It's a very in-depth study and it is not for the faint of heart because we are going deeply into the Scripture and deeply into the mind of Christ. I hope you will, if you want to, go back and get contacts. We have many video's that are archived and you can go back and view those. (See last page).

We're in the midst of the Sermon on the Mount and we're still in **Matthew 5**. The section that we are starting today is a new section that is in **Matthew 5:21-48**. There is also some additional information in **Luke 6:27-30** and **Luke 6:32-36**. Jesus is talking here about six different areas of our lives. He talks first about *murder* and *anger*. He then talks about *lust* and *adultery* and then He's going to talk about *divorce*. He's going to talk about *oaths*, and then *retaliation*, and then *loving our enemies*. So obviously this is a very long section, and we're going to tackle the first part today. So, I want to read to you from **Matthew 5:21-26**. Let's see if we can cover that part today. By the way, I'm reading in the **New American Standard Bible**.

Matthew 5:21-48

"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, 'raca' {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 your way; 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 deliver you {hand you over} to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into the prison.²⁶ Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent. Well, let's dive into this.

He begins by talking about "You have heard that the **ancients** were told". "The Ancients" has the sense of something that is "original" or "primeval" ... those of "old time". It is used three times in this context. In **Luke 9:8** we have the sense of the "prophets of old". In **Luke 9:19** and **Acts 15:7** it talks about the "early days", in **Acts 15:21** talks about Moses, "from ancient generations", and **2 Cor. 5:17** talks about "the old" has passed away.

(αρχαίων) That's the same word ... "the ancients" have passed away. **2 Peter 2:5** says that God did not spare the "ancient" world. This, of course, was the time of Noah. And then in **Rev. 12:9** the "serpent of old" or the "ancient serpent" he is called, because he's been around for a very, very long time. So Jesus is going back to the origins of the Jewish system. Jesus is indicating a *change* in the systems.

Growing up and studying this in my memory, we often watched and presented the Jule Miller film strips to people. The filmstrips would present of message of salvation according to three different ages: the Patriarchal age, the Mosaic age, and the Christian age. So, Jesus is going back at least as far as the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments, so when He thinks about the "ancients", He's going way back from His time to at least 1500 years.

These "ancients" or "people of the distant past" were told; not just told but commanded, "**You shall not commit murder**". The word here, of course, means "to put to death", "to kill", "to slay" or "to commit murder". In **Matthew 23:31** and **35** regarding the Jews and their sons, it says that **they murdered the prophets** and the blood was shed upon the earth. So Jesus is talking to people who He is later going to *accuse* of murder. In this context, it is talking about the 'taking of innocent life' *in order to silence* the voices of the prophets!

So, what are the implications of such a command when we talk about murder? Capital punishment, war, abortion, euthanasia, suicide..., *all of these* are questions that enter into this **command** not to murder. **The question centers on the right of one human to take the life of another.**

Such was done by God's authority by the "ancients" in capital punishment and war. Some authority was given by statutes, and others were given by verbal commands of God. Division in the body has occurred over such questions. I'm referring to the church. We have had many divisions over "can a Christian participate in war"? Then we talk about, well, what kinds of wars? Can they participate in a "just" war as opposed to one that might be considered "unjust"? It gets into a lot of very deep questions. We also speak of "self-defense". Can we kill someone in self-defense?

The murder that Jesus speaks of makes one liable to the court, so this is a murder that makes one liable to the court under the Law of Moses. So, what would **not** make one liable? There might be some 'taking of life' that would not cause someone to be liable to the courts. He's talking about it, really in the context of Old Testament Law.

In the Old Testament various kinds of the 'taking of life' was legislated. In **Leviticus 20** human sacrifices were of course **absolutely forbidden**. Capital punishment **is** demanded in many situations in **Leviticus 20**. In **Deuteronomy 21** it is interesting that in the case of a man found slain in the open country and it is not known 'who did it', the elders of the nearest village have to break the neck of an un-worked heifer for expiation. In other words, there has to be some "life for life", and since they don't know who actually killed this man in the open field, then a heifer is the one that has to suffer for the death. It's just interesting how the Law is laid out this way. In **Deuteronomy 21:18-21** there is capital punishment ... even for a rebellious son. It's described as a son who is a glutton and a drunkard. So, even under those circumstances, the son could be put to death.

In **Deuteronomy 22:8** it is required to make a parapet around the roof of your house so that someone will not fall and die. It's like putting a cage or a fence around your pool to ensure that someone can't get hurt, but if you fail to do so, it would "bring blood guilt upon you". Then, in **Deuteronomy 24:16** it says that fathers cannot be put to death for the son, in other words, for the sins of the son. This is also reiterated in **Ezekiel 18:4**. In **Exodus 21** there are various situations covered where loss of life is present. The distinction is made between **premeditated**, as in **lying in wait** for someone or presumptuous murder, and those murders that are more *murders of impulse*, we might even call them *murders of passion*. The **former** is to be put to death, so if you have **premeditated** you're to be put to death. But the latter, those who kill someone on an *impulse* may flee for refuge and be put on trial.

There were different requirements if a man struck his slave and the slave died. The slave is considered under Old Testament Law to be "property". If a "woman with child" was accidentally struck and miscarries, there can be a fine. An ox who gores someone must be put to death, but if the ox was predisposed to goring and the owner did not restrain him, then he, too, was to be put to death. The owner could be put to death for something the ox did if he had not restrained him. It was different if a slave was gored. If a slave was gored then the owner did not have to be put to death.

In **Leviticus 24:17-22** the Law of "life for life" was established, or an *eye for an eye*, or a *tooth for a tooth*. The strange thing to me about Old Testament laws regarding loss of life is the distinction made between slaves and free men. That is probably the most disturbing part of what I find under the statutes of the Old Testament although all of them have their distinct difficulties.

The approved method of capital punishment in the Old Testament was predominantly by stoning in which the community participated. It was a **brutal** way to die, perhaps designated to instill in the community the horror of the crime that had been committed.

The word "court" here, that a person is liable to the "court", is the word, "krisis" (κρισις). It is a place of decision. By extension, it is a tribunal implying 'justice'. It can be translated accusation, condemnation, or judgment. The word "liable" here, which says you're liable to the court, is a word that means "held in or by", or "subjected to". So, when you're liable, you're being 'held' by something, you're being 'subjected' to something, you're culpable'.

Hebrews 2:15 says that through *fear of death* people were subject to slavery all of their lives. In other words, because of their fear of death, they were **liable** to slavery. This idea is something that is noxious. When you have this fear of death and you're subject to slavery all your life; it is something that is 'noxious' to you. It's very unpleasant. You're subject to sensor. (ενοχος) means harm or danger like noxious fumes or noxious odors that you might smell. In **Matthew 26:66**, when the crowd said Jesus was deserving of death, the word "deserving" is the word noxious is used. It is used in **Mark 3:29** regarding blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. One is guilty of, or in danger of an eternal sin. In **1 Corinthians 11:27** the one eating the bread and drinking the cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of, (it uses the word noxious) the body and the blood of the Lord. So for that person, the body and blood of the Lord becomes like a noxious odor; or maybe it is to God. In **James 2:10** the person who breaks the law in one point is guilty (or noxious) of all ... in danger, liable.

Jesus' point is that taking another's life puts one in danger; in this case, judgment of the court. So, if you kill someone, murder someone, you're putting your own life in danger, and that will be determined by the court.

As Jesus transitions to the idea of "*but I say to you*", we are at a critical question here of how He uses that phrase. Is He 'giving by authority a new or additional teaching' or is He merely 'giving a Divine interpretation of the true intent of the Law regarding murder'? We need to understand the difference here. When Jesus says, "But I say unto you" is He merely interpreting correctly the Old Testament Law or is He giving something new; something that has never been said before ... that wasn't said under the Old Testament? In other words, is Jesus going back to the original intent for people to avoid anger toward their brother, and that this was assumed in the command not to murder. Is he saying anger is 'assumed' in the command 'not to murder' so he is just reinterpreting that? In that case, anger would have been self-evident that it leads, or can lead to murder and therefore in order to avoid murder one must avoid becoming angry.

Remember, the law reveals *the character of God* and so would His law not reflect His whole character instead of some outward manifestation of it? My point is that even under the old law, we're not just dealing here with behaviors; we're dealing with *character issues behind* the behaviors because the law of God is based upon the character of God, and therefore His character will be seen in it.

But this raises the issue about *God's anger*; about God becoming angry. For me, a difficult question arises. Did God's anger lead Him to take the life of someone or someone's? Of course, it did. The wilderness examples suffice of God becoming angry with the people in the wilderness and many of them dying. So, is it inherently wrong to be angry leading to someone's death? If it is inherently wrong, then God is also liable, subject to the court ... that God is violating His own law.

Was God's anger different, and certainly his anger is different in some respects from my anger, but anger is still anger. Or does it have something to do with our fallibility? Is Jesus saying these things about our anger because we are fallible people and that we cannot be trusted in controlling our anger; however God always righteously controls His anger, and any outcome of that anger is going to be *justified*, where it would *not be justified* if we were acting on our anger?

The word for "become angry" is the word which means "to provoke to anger", "to irritate", "to be angry", "to be indignant" or "to be enraged". It is based on the word "orgé" (οργή) as in the word orgasm or the sap that is rising in the tree and it is being expressed through the skin of that tree. In the former, there is *stimulation* as in orgasm; in the latter there is *heat* as in the change of the seasons. That's what makes the sap run which causes sap in the inner part of the tree to kind of ooze out of the trunk like in maple syrup and turpentine. These are natural processes.

So why does anger have a negative connotation here ... the consequences getting ramped up from court, because that's where you first begin, and then going to the supreme court, and then to Hell itself?

In **Matthew 18:34** the lord or the king was moved with anger at the injustice of the forgiven man in not showing forgiveness to his brother. In this case, the king hands him over to the torturers till he pays all that he owes, so there seems to always be some consequence for an injustice that arouses the anger of someone in authority.

Here is a point to ponder: **Anger creates liability**. What is the outcome of anger? There is a consequence or result, and at some point, the result will follow naturally and uncontrollably. What we're getting at here is that anger, automatically, causes someone to be liable and what they do with that anger at that point, if it's *not* controlled, at some point that anger will flow naturally and uncontrollably and cause harm. Just as a man and with a woman in orgasm, at some point once they go down that road too far, there will be orgasm. It's interesting that Jesus goes into this subject next in the treatment of adultery. If this is in marriage and commitment, then the consequences or results will be good, but if outside of marriage the results may carry extreme liabilities.

Anger within certain contexts may be appropriate and lead to just results. But the kind Jesus talks of here gains momentum and *takes on a life of its own* leading to ever increasing liabilities. The court; I'm in trouble. The supreme court; I'm in more trouble, exhausting my possibilities for redemption. And then there's Hell. There is no opportunity for redemption here. The punishment is set. No parole. We must explore the progression from anger, to Raca, to fool, to get Jesus' meaning. Jesus not only talks about the increased consequences from court, to supreme court, to Hell, but He talks about the ramping up of the anger, from anger to raca to fool saying those things and these things will inform us about what Jesus is saying here...how He's thinking about this.

Regarding the progression from anger, to raca, to fool; **raca** is of Chaldean origin meaning, "empty one". Basically, it means "the worthless one", a term of utter vilification. So, what is the issue here?

To proclaim someone 'worthless' is a designation regarding the *person*, not a judgment regarding the *behavior* of the person. Is the point that we have no authority to proclaim one of God's servants or children to be worthless; no longer of value or worth? How do we know when someone is empty? In **Luke 13:6-9** Jesus tells the story of the fig tree that did not produce fruit. He proclaimed it 'worthless', just using up the ground. But the servant begged for one more year to work with it to see if he could get it to bear fruit. This is an example where Jesus has proclaimed the fig tree to be worthless. He's basically saying, 'raca' to the fig tree. In **Matthew 25:14-30** we have the parable of the talents. The last slave, who buried his talent, was called wicked and lazy and *worthless*. Another word similar to **raca** is a word that means without usefulness or unprofitable. But what determines this? How do we determine whether someone is truly worthless?

The liability is to the council or the court, as it is translated in the New American Standard Bible. It means 'people who are sitting together', the assembly, probably the Sanhedrin. In **Matthew 10:17**, "beware of men because they will deliver you to the court..." I'm not sure if I understand the connection between saying **raca** and the liability of the Sanhedrin. I suppose it depends on 'who you say it to' so if you say it to a High Priest or you say it to someone in authority, you may get hauled into the court of the Sanhedrin.

The third progression is saying, “You fool”, so we’ve gone from anger, to *raca* to ‘you fool’. The word is “moros” (μωρος) is the word from which we get “moron”. It means *dull* or *stupid*, *heedless*, or a *blockhead*. It means *absurd*, a *fool*. It is later used in **Matthew 7:26** where Jesus speaks of the *fool* being the one who hears the Word of God and does not put it into practice and at least three times in **Matthew 23** Jesus calls the Jewish leaders *fools*. Of the virgins of **Matthew 25:2**, five of them were called *fools*. In **1 Corinthians 3:18** one must become *foolish* in order to become wise, so it can be used in a paradoxical way too. In **1 Corinthians 4:10**, Paul was a *fool* for Christ’s sake, and he’s probably making reference here to being “called” a fool by some ... but he was happy to accept that if he was a “*fool*” for Christ.

The liability of this, of saying to someone that they are a *fool* is the ‘fiery hell’ as this is translated. This is “Geenna” (γεέννα), the valley of Hinnom, and we’ll talk about that a little bit more in a few moments. The reality of hell is self-evident. The nature of hell may not be so clear. In other words, Jesus talked about hell and made it clear that there **is** a hell, but the nature of that hell is often debated. From this text in **Matthew 5:22**, “**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, ‘race’ {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**”, Jesus moves from temporal liabilities to an eternal liability, but Jesus uses a temporal term to describe the eternal one. He says the “Gehenna of fire”.

Remember, Jesus begins this discussion about the command *not to murder*, and then He shifts to *anger*, and then to the *liabilities* of anger which progresses if not put into check. Gehenna is the valley of Jerusalem where the worship of Molech was carried out. We find that in **1 Kings 11:7**, **2 Kings 16:3** and **Jeremiah 32:35**. This was a place of refuse, trash, carcasses of animals and even human remains of criminals unburied. There were constant fires which consumed the garbage. It is also called “Topheth” in **Jeremiah 7:31**. It is an abomination, a place to be spit upon. The word Topheth comes from the word “ptuo” (πτυω) meaning to spit; a place of burning or cremation. This became associated with punishment in the other world and of demons and the souls of wicked men.

2 Peter 2:4 Peter uses the word “Tarturos” where the sinful angels were cast, but translated here, “Hell”. I was told that Hell was a Welsh word used to describe the process of covering the potatoes; and so they would say the words “helling the potatoes” because that’s what “helling” meant in Welch. It meant to cover, so that is associated with the meaning of the word hell. Tarturos is the deepest abyss of Hades in Greek myth, the place of imprisonment and torture ... the casting down into it. So it always has the sense of being “down” somewhere. Could this be why we think of dungeons, places of torture being deep under castles, etc.?

When we talk about the “fiery hell”, other equivalents of the lake of fire are in **Revelation 20:14-15**, “**Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.** ¹⁵ **And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**” Death and Hades were thrown into the Lake of fire which is the second death, and the only avoidance of expressing the second death is to have one’s name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. So how does an angry person fit into this picture?

In **Revelation 21:8** it says ***murderers will have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone***. So it kind of takes us back to what Jesus said in Matthew 5. The overcomer will avoid the Lake of fire as it says in **Revelation 21:7**. Now there are parallels in **1 John**. If you read **1 John 3** and **1 John 5** one dealing with the love of a brother unlike Cain who slew his brother, you see where anger can lead. He became angry with his brother and it eventually led to murder. In **1 John 3:15** the one who *hates* his brother is a murderer. Here it doesn't talk about anger; it talks about '*hate*' and he says that no murderer has eternal life in him. In **1 John 5:4** the theme is *overcoming* and is being developed here, and it says, "By faith, we overcome the world." The one born of God overcomes the world.

The idea of overcoming a particular impulse, in this case anger which can lead to murder, is to be pursued. In **Matthew 25:41** we have everlasting fire which is talked about which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Those sent there are called "*accursed*" ones. It means to doom; it's the opposite of bless. It is someone who is devoted to destruction, which as the word "anathema", an accursed thing. **Matthew 11:21**, cities who would not listen to Jesus were more cursed than even Sodom and Gomorrah. "Anathema" means to ban, to be excommunicated. The Hebrew word is Herem, anything that was irrevocable even to the point of death, because death was seen as being irrevocable. If you sinned to a certain extent, then there was no way back from it. You can see this is **Lev. 27:28, Joshua 6:17, 7:1**, anything that is abominable and detestable. **Deuteronomy 7:26** says, "And you shall not bring an **abomination** into your house and become designated for destruction, like it; you are to utterly detest it, and you are to utterly loathe it, for it is something designated for destruction."

When we get into these areas, we begin to see that there are "places that anger can take us" that are very dark places, and so Jesus is saying let's not just talk about **murder**; let's talk about **anger** because **anger** can take us into many places.

In **Matthew 25:41** the reference is to those who did not serve the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoner and therefore they could be subject to this ultimate punishment. **Jude 7** speaks of Sodom and Gomorrah indulging in gross immorality going after strange flesh and were an example of those who would undergo everlasting punishment if fire.

Jesus most often uses "hell". He's the One who talks about it more than anybody else. **Matthew 5:29-30, Matthew 10:28, Luke 12:5**, and His half brother James in **James 3:6**, in **Matthew 5:22, 18:9**, and **Mark 9:47** are all examples about being punished with fire. The words, "asbestos unquenchable", the unquenchable fire is added in **Mark 9:43 and 9:45**. Another phrase, "huion (υιον) gehenna" means "son of Hell" in **Matthew 23:15**. Another phrase is "krisis (κρισις) gehenna" is "the punishment of Hell" in **Matthew 23:33**. In **Jude 6** and in **13** it includes the blackest darkness which is kind of interesting that you could have fire and at the same time have blackest darkness.

It is clear that this is not a place that anyone would want to be, whether it's a place you consciously will endure forever or a place of destruction over a certain period of time. Those are the debates between the two. Is hell eternal in a sense that you will suffer consciously forever or is it a place of destroying the soul or the spirit of man.

Jesus will next tell us how to avoid the escalation of anger. Anger mitigation is proactive. In this place, Jesus places the responsibility on the person who is **not** angry; the one to whom the anger is directed. So He's going to talk about how you mitigate the anger, so if **you know** someone is angry with you, how do **you** try to dispel the anger in the **other** person? It's interesting that Jesus holds the "object" of the anger somewhat responsible for reducing the anger.

In **Matthew 18** and other places the responsibility is on the **angry** person, but here He puts the responsibility on the person to whom the anger is being directed. Jesus' instructions are reconciliation and friendship. He frames the first in the context of 'presenting your offering to God'. Our offering to God is affected by our personal relationships. So, what is this in a Jewish context, and how do we apply it in a Christian context?

Matthew 5:23 says, "Therefore, if you are **presenting your offering at the altar**, and there you remember that your brother has something against you..."

The word, '**presenting**' here "prosphero" means "to bear forward", "to lead", "to tender" or "to treat" or "to bring", "to offer" or "to present unto". The word "pros" means "forward", it's a 'preposition of direction' meaning "toward".

The second word in that phrase 'phero' means "to bear" or "to carry" something. It is "something toward", in this case "towards God". The word '**offering**' here is the word for "**sacrifice**" or "**gift**". In **Matthew 8:4**, the cleansed lepers were to present themselves to the priests and to present an offering as commanded by Moses as a testimony to the fact of their healing. In **Matthew 23:18** Jesus refers to the offering on the altar, and then in **Hebrews 5:1** the priests are offering gifts and sacrifices for sins. You see that also in **Hebrews 8:3-4** and then in **Hebrews 9:9** the Old Testament gifts could not make the worshipers perfect.

Hebrews 11:4 it is used of Abel who offered a "better sacrifice" than Cain. This has elements of Jesus' case. I'm not sure where the **anger** originated with Cain towards Abel, but he was offering a gift to God, and so you might find a parallel with Cain and Abel because you have **anger** and you also have the **offering of gifts** in that story.

Jesus adds, '**at the altar**'. So if you are offering your gift **at the altar** to indicate a religious activity. It involves a priest and has some official components. As there are many types of offerings enjoined in the Law of Moses and since Jesus is not specific, the conclusion may be one of our being involved in some type of worship by which we are extending to God a gift that we hope that He will accept as a show of our good relationship with Him.

The word for altar here is found in the story of Zacharias in the Holy Place where it mentions to the right of the altar of incense. The other altar was the altar for burnt offerings, so there are a couple of different altars in the Holy Place. In **Matthew 23:35** reference is made to Zechariah who was murdered between the temple and the altar. **2 Chronicles 24:20-22** gives this story. Zechariah was the son of the priest who confronted the people with their sins. "Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has forsaken you." The king Joash joined a conspiracy to have him killed which they did by stoning him in the court of the House of the LORD.

It's a little bit confusing here because Zechariah's father is Jehoiada. In **Matthew 23** Zechariah is described as the son of Berechiah. Zechariah the prophet, in **Zechariah 1:1** is the son of Berechiah who lived after the exile so it's a little confusing as to who is really being talked about here. Take also into account that 2 Chronicles was the last book of the Hebrew Bible. Jesus' point was that from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, all the blood of the prophets would come upon His generation. Also note **Luke 11:51**, and of course, Cain and Able involved an altar as well. In **Luke 11:51**, no mention of Zechariah's father is made. It makes me wonder if some Scribes added Berechiah to Matthew's text thinking he was helping Jesus out.

Anyway, the altar of burnt offerings was located in the courtyard. See **Exodus 27:1- 8** for a description of the bronze altar in the courtyard ... so it wasn't actually in the Most Holy Place.

The word "brother" in this text "[If you know your brother has something against you...](#)" does not always mean a spiritual relationship between two saved males. "Brother" is contextual. It could mean 'blood brothers', 'adoptive brothers', it can be in regard to race or nationality, or due to being in the same organization.

In **Acts 22:13** Ananias refers to Saul as a brother. He was a Jewish brother but he was not yet saved. The Greek word for brother is "adelphos" (αδελφος). Delphus (δελφους) is "womb", one connected with another in any kind of intimacy or fellowship. By implication, 'one loved as a brother', as somewhat like 'neighbor' in the story of the Good Samaritan, "Who is my neighbor". One point is that the person is someone who you value and the relationship is one that you value. It is important to God how you *treat* the relationships.

As we try to get into the real life understanding of what Jesus is saying, there seems to be some conscience involved and there is some inconvenience involved. So in our consciences, *we are not 'okay' with someone not being 'okay' with us*. Let me say that again: in our conscience, *we are not 'okay' with someone not being 'okay' with us*.

I find this difficult to apply as to the quality and quantity and the logistics. *To what extent does someone have to be upset with me before I confront them?* When should I merely "overlook" an offense? Remember, in this context, Jesus is speaking of the "escalation of anger". Whatever it is the other person has against me is serious enough to cause them anger towards me, and this needs to be checked. But in the passage, Jesus assumes "I can do this" logistically. He assumes it is possible...that I know where the person is, that they are near enough to accomplish this, and that the person is willing to listen, and possibly reconcile.

But perhaps there is something else here in the context ... that the offense has the potential of getting me thrown in jail and that the one who is angry has already initiated action against me. Could Jesus just be telling us to settle out of court? Later, in **1 Corinthians 6**, Paul teaches this us to have people in the church settle their dispute to keep it from going before the pagans, working out agreements with others to avoid criminal proceedings and possible prosecution which may not always be just. Is this what is being discussed here?

Reconciliation is the heart of God. He wants people to agree, to get along, to walk together, to work it out, and to demonstrate love for one another.

Romans 12:18 says, “As much as it depends on you, live at peace with one another.” So is this inconvenient? Yes, it requires us to make the effort if we are in the wrong, **or** if we are in the right! Peace and reconciliation is **always my responsibility**. This is not just about working out a deal, **but working out a relationship**. So Jesus says “to be reconciled”, “to be changed” thoroughly. It can be a mental reconciliation of where you’re okay within your mind. It means to change one’s feelings towards another, and the word is only used here in **Matthew 5:24**.

In **Galatians 4:20**, Paul hopes to be able to **change** his tone, one of being perplexed or in **1 Corinthians 15:51-52** the **changing** to take place at the resurrection; so there is some **change** that has to occur. Or the earth which will be rolled up and changed in **Hebrews 1:12**. By the way Jesus speaks of this, **there must be choice that we can make towards others with whom we have friction**. We have the **choice** to be reconciled and the **possibility** of being reconciled.

Then **Jesus takes this change of mind and feeling to another level**. He says, “Make friends **quickly**”. ‘Make friends’ is to be “well-minded”, “to reconcile”, or “to agree”. There are two words involved here. The first word means “benevolent” or “kindly” and the other is the word “mind”. Those two words mean “to be okay in our minds”, to be “well disposed” or “well intentioned” towards another. This is not the common word for “friend”; it’s not “Phileo”.

Jesus describes the other person as an **opponent**. An opponent may be someone who is in a lawsuit. Even Satan is described as an opponent, the plaintiff or the accuser. **Luke 12:58** parallels this as an adversary or an enemy. In **Luke 18:3** a widow pleads with a judge for legal protection from her **opponent**. **1 Peter 5:8** uses it of Satan as a means for right or justice. “Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

Jesus seems to indicate here that even someone who is “in the right” may still be denied justice in court, and it would be better to settle outside of court. Jesus knew this firsthand. He was constantly being refused justice, being accused falsely, and would undergo a travesty of justice at the hands of the Jews and the Romans.

In Jesus’ case, there was no ‘settlement’ on the way to court’. God **used this very injustice of the cross to justify all the unjust**. **God can commandeer evil and make it accomplish His will!**

Was Jesus’ intent merely to avoid jail and full payment? In other words, was Jesus about not accepting full responsibility for one’s actions? Of course not!

I think the point is that reconciliation involves **grace**, not **condemnation**. In our relationship with God we cannot pay the last cent. We **need** grace; we **don’t need** justice! “Jailed until we pay the last cent” is **hell**. **We never reach the ‘last cent’**.

Anger often leads to wanting our day in court so we can *feel* justified. We are often looking for a way to *alleviate our shame* or *embarrassment*. Though we may have some guilt and liability, we seek ways to mitigate it, at least, so we can ‘save face’.

The issue becomes about **me** ... how do **I** look? What will people think? The accuser seems to have power over us, and if we respond in anger, or self-justification and retaliation, we escalate the matter and we put ourselves in more jeopardy.

But the path of reconciliation and making friends is better, and often helps us accomplish our desired end. A fight often just leaves everyone bloody, with no winners. Truth, justice, honor, and mercy all get trampled in the process.

The parable in **Matthew 18:21-36** concerning forgiveness, up to **seventy times seven** talks about this. The *forgiven person who does not forgive those who owe them* will be held accountable to the judge and the torturers until he should repay all that he owed him.

Think of this **impossible situation**: *How* can anyone repay such a huge debt? **And how** can they do so, in jail while they’re being tortured? There is no opportunity to earn a living or repay even a portion of it.

So anger often displaces mercy and merely creates a world of opponents. We do well to handle our anger before **it** handles **us**. And we would also do well to help other people who are angry against us, to handle their anger before we may suffer because of it.

Well, as you can see, this is a very in depth study and there’s a lot to this. So we’ve covered the first aspect of this section about **anger** and the **consequences of anger** and *how it relates to murder*.

Next time, we’ll go into the next section having to do with lust and adultery. It’s a very similar process that we will follow in trying to understand the mind of Christ regarding those things.

Thank you for joining us and I hope you get something from this that you can use in your life in order to have the mind of Christ.

For more information or more studies please go to: <https://www.centralsarasota.org/>

Until next time, God bless