

You have Heard... But I say to You... 1: Anger

Introduction

After beginning the sermon with eight “*blessed are*” virtues and character strengths, Jesus moves on to reveal six “*you have heard... but I say*” comparisons. He contrasted what they had been hearing (and upon which they were basing their conduct and opinions) and what He would demand of His disciples in the kingdom.

1.	5:21-26	Murder & Anger	4.	5:33-37	Taking Oaths
2.	5:27-30	Adultery & Lust	5.	5:38-42	Vengeance
3.	5:31-32	Reasons for Divorce	6.	5:43-48	Love & Hate

Two important things need to be remembered as we enter this new section. Jesus contrasted what they were hearing with His own words. Then at the end of the sermon, made certain that everyone present understood that hearing and ignoring His words had serious consequences.

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”
Mt. 7:24-27

Jesus raised the level of conduct in these six realms to exactly where they needed to be, He then concluded the sermon with the demand that they reach it. If they heard and changed their conduct they would build on the rock. But if they heard what Jesus said and continued to listen to the easier path they are acting foolishly and building their eternal judgment on sand.

The second important thing as we look through Matthew’s eyes is the response from the people who heard and commented on the manner Jesus spoke. He was preaching with an authority that led them to marvel. It was different from what they had heard from the others.

And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Mt. 7:28-29

These words were not spoken as suggestions, nor were they simply taught as information. He spoke them with an authority that it made a strong impression on them.

What was the source of “You have heard”

There are two very different approaches to explain the contrast. Both are taken from the previous passage where Jesus revealed His relationship to the Law of Moses and to the scribes and Pharisees. While He had not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law, He had also come to expose the hypocrisy and lax moral standards of their teachers and leaders.

Some believe these words were spoken to contrast how the Law would be modified after it was fulfilled. Others that He contrasted the true meaning necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven with that of the false teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. While it could be Moses Law, the false teachings of the scribes and Pharisees is the more logical of the two. Why would Jesus immediately do what He stated He had not come to do?

Throughout His ministry, Jesus was preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom

No matter what Jesus contrasted, He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. The Spirit used Matthew to make it very clear in the final words of the previous chapter that Jesus had been and was continuing to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

*And Jesus went about **all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. 25 **Great multitudes followed Him** — from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan. 1 And **seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain**, and when He was seated **His disciples came to Him**. 2 Then **He opened His mouth and taught them**, saying: Mt. 4:23-5:2*

Jesus was **preaching the gospel of the kingdom** in “**all Galilee**,” and He was still in Galilee. “**Great multitudes**” had followed Him and were present at this time. When He saw these multitudes “**he opened his mouth and taught them**.” Taught them what? The nearest antecedent is “**teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom**.” It was when “**He went up on a mountain**” that He was “**preaching the gospel of the kingdom**.” The Holy Spirit through Matthew made

it clear that Jesus was **“preaching the gospel of the kingdom,”** in His sermon on the Mount.

The logical conclusion: The sermon on the mount is an example of how Jesus taught the gospel of the kingdom.

With all this in mind, the most logical and grammatical conclusion is that Jesus spoke of the error and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Note how they were the focus of the previous verse and nearest antecedent to this.

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to those of old...

Only if we can't find these teachings in the Law should we conclude Jesus spoke only of Moses Law.

You have Heard: You Shall Not Murder

You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ Mt. 5:21

“*You shall not murder*” is a direct quote from the sixth of the ten commandments written on stone and revealed in Ex 20:1-17. The rest of the quote is what the scribes and Pharisees had added. Israel in Jesus’ day “heard” that the Law of Moses taught the sum total of obedience to God’s command not to kill was to refrain from murder. The only violation was murder and only then were they in danger of the judgment(punishment from a civil court). As long as they never actually killed, they were innocent. They could be abusive, cruel, derisive and rude, but if they stopped short of taking a life were innocent and morally upright.

Were the scribes and Pharisees teaching the truth? Is that all Moses said to the “*those of old?*” Was it God’s intent through Moses that this command only forbid the act and left the emotions leading to the act lawful? The answer is clearly “no!” God warned them against hatred, anger and wrath.

If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. 5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it. Ex. 23:4-5

*You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but **you shall love your neighbor as yourself:** I am the Lord. Lev. 19:17-18*

An angry man stirs up strife, And a furious man abounds in transgression. Pr. 29:22

A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention. Pr. 15:18

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. Pr. 16:32

The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression Pr. 19:11

Although the other passages elaborate, the real key is the phrase **“you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** Later when asked about the greatest command Jesus chose these very words.

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: **‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’** 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Mt. 22:36-40*

Every command(including murder) hangs on loving our neighbor as yourself. It was never intended to only forbid the act alone. It all began when love ceased and anger and hatred began. Paul made the same application.

*Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, **“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Rom. 13:8-10*

From these passages it is clear that for murder, Jesus contrasted the teachings Moses with the lax observance taught by the scribes and Pharisees. Not His teaching with Moses.

The Point of Violation is in the Heart

God saw the violation in the heart before the act. The scribes and Pharisees taught only the deed itself violated the Law. Jesus explained that by the time the thoughts or emotions had reached the intensity to take a life, they had greatly exceeded what the law actually forbid.

As noted above the two greatest commands in the Law of Moses were “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*” and “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” “*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*” God crafted the Law of Moses to create these two great ideals in man’s heart. Each and every command in the Law illustrated and led to one or both of these goals. The Law was designed to help them fervently and

intensely love God with all their heart, soul, and mind. To please Him not just in actions, but also in emotion and will. This alone would cover all Jesus said here in the Sermon on the Mount. Yet Jesus also added that the Law and the prophets were also designed to help us “*love our neighbor as ourselves.*” Love for our fellow man would obviously forbid murder, but Jesus forcefully stated it also meant anything leading to a desire to kill. The path to murder began not with a corpse, which is the end. It began the very instant anger was directed toward them.

But I say unto You, that Every One who is Angry

The punishment the scribes and Pharisees gave for the actual act of murder, Jesus gave the moment anger was conceived against his brother.

whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; 5:21-22

Jesus “**said**” the command “You shall not murder” is violated when one is “*angry with his brother.*” It is at the moment of the emotional response of anger to an action by a brother that the path to murder is entered. The exact moment when the intent of the Law against murder is violated and sin imputed occurs when this anger is created. It is therefore essential that we know exactly what this anger consists of. There are two Greek words used throughout the NT. Although the translators sometimes translate them differently, the same basic meaning is retained.

NT synonyms: Anger(*orge*) and Wrath(*thumos*)

Anger and wrath are translated from two different Greek terms. Each has its own particular realm though they can be used interchangeably.

“orge,...(fr orgao to teem, denoting an internal motion, esp that of plants and fruits swelling with juice... any violent emotion, but esp. (and chiefly in Attic) anger. In Bibl. Grk. anger, wrath, indignation... anger exhibited in punishing, wrath, outburst of anger,... to provoke, arouse to anger; pass. to be provoked to anger, be angry, be wroth;...” (Thayer, p. 452; 3709)

*“thumos,... In the N.T. 1. passion, angry heat, anger forthwith boiling up and soon subsiding again, (**orge on the other hand, denotes indignation which has arisen gradually and become more settled;**... 2. glow, ardor...” (Thayer, p. 293; 2372)*

The distinction in the words is important that whether they are translated anger or wrath, (*orge*) (pronounced oar-gay) is aroused more slowly and becomes more settled. While *thumos* is a rapid flaming of anger that dissipates quickly and is forgotten. *orge* is the oak log that burns hot for hours while *thumos* is the kindling that rapidly flares then is gone. Vine discussed this in more detail:

Notes: (1) *thumos*, “wrath” (not translated “anger”), is to be distinguished from *orge*, in this respect, that *thumos* indicates a more agitated condition of the feelings, an outburst of wrath from inward indignation, while *orge* suggests a more settled or abiding condition of mind, frequently with a view to taking revenge. *Orge* is less sudden in its rise than *thumos*, but more lasting in its nature. *thumos* expresses more the inward feeling, *orge* the more active emotion. *thumos* may issue in revenge, though it does not necessarily include it. It is characteristic that it quickly blazes up and quickly subsides, though that is not necessarily implied in each case. (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, 3709)

Jesus used the verb *orgizo*, to describe an “*anger that often arises slowly but settles and remains.*” He also placed it in the middle voice, making it an anger that is with reference to ourselves.

orgizo ... “to provoke, to arouse to anger,” is used in the middle voice in the eight places where it is found, and signifies “to be angry, wroth.” (from Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, NT:3710)

Although the text is a little obscure (KJV/NKJV using Textus Receptus add “*without a cause*” while ASV NASB; ESV leave it out). But there are good reasons to conclude it belongs. But added or not it is clearly implied. Anger, like all emotions has a rightful place in the heart of those created in the image and likeness of God. God often becomes justifiably angry over the conduct of sinners. His wrath (*orge* -settled and remaining) is one of the strongest aspects of the judgment day.

*For the wrath (**orge**) of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, Rom 1:18-19*

*But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath (**orge**) in the day of wrath (**orge**) and revelation of the righteous judgment of God Rom 2:5*

*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath (**orge**) of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Eph 5:6-7*

*11 So I swore in My wrath (**orge**), ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” Heb 3:10*

These had a cause! Paul also used this word in a way that revealed that caught early enough and

properly directed and controlled is not sinful (but is prone to it). Yet no one can deny that it is an emotion prone to abuse. Although we can be angry and not sin, Paul warned we are better off to simply remove it and replace it with kindness, tenderness and forgiveness.

Be angry (orgizo), and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath (par-orgismos), 27 nor give place to the devil. 31 Let all bitterness, wrath (thumos), anger (orge), clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Eph 4:26-27; 31-32

When Anger becomes Murder?

Since Jesus demanded we see anger with a brother as the moment when the sin of murder is imputed and needed repentance, we must learn exactly when anger becomes a sin. As noted above, Paul revealed that the emotion itself was not sinful:

Be angry, and do not sin: let not the sun go down on your wrath, Eph 4:26

Again all emotions are part of the image and likeness of God. None are inherently wrong. Yet some are more easily abused and thus more dangerous! Anger is an emotion easily abused. Jesus "says" to us that the precise moment one becomes guilty of murder is when "angry with his brother without a cause." Hence we can "be angry and not sin," but we can also "be angry" and "in danger." What is this line? What is the tipping point? When does anger stop being lawful and become sinful?

The answer is in the phrase "with a brother." Anger at sin, evil, wickedness or error is lawful, but anger directed at a person is not. While we say "hate the sin but not the sinner," Jesus says do not be "angry with a brother." We can be angry at sin, but not the sinner. Since God wants us to feel mercy, patience, love, and forbearance toward our brother, anger with a brother can only short circuit it.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. Col 3:12-13

When we under the influence of "tender mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another and forgiving," anger is kept within its proper boundary. When it leaps these "fences," it becomes a violation of God's law. When we become "angry with a brother," and/or hatred/desire for vengeance fills our heart (even for an instant), we become a murderer:

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. I Jn 3:15

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath (orge); for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Rom 12:19-21

Such anger is always destructive and never produces any good. Anger is sinless only when it still leads to seek our neighbor's good. The moment it creates frustration or bitterness leading to exasperation, insults or even a momentary hatred, it becomes murder. Disciples must learn to contain anger. Anger must never be directed toward another person. The slightest desire to hurt, or sense of pleasure at the thought of harm befalling is the exact moment when the sin of murder begins.

Raka and Moros

That this is the truth is evident by what Jesus gave as the next step in the progression toward murder. First we feel anger, then we move to words of contempt, derision or hatred. Think about it! Have you ever become so frustrated with the actions that you begin to think or say (jerk, idiot, stupid)? Any emotion that leads us to think of a brother in such a way proves we have crossed the line into sin. Words of contempt only expose the anger that makes such words possible. Terms of contempt and derision are available in all languages. In the time of Christ they were "raka" and "moros":

"raka...empty, i.e. a senseless, empty-headed man, a term of reproach used in the time of Christ..." (Thayer, p 561; 4469)

"raka ... is a transcription of the Aramaic insult ... raqa as a call to servants: "Hi there, you idiot!" ... It expresses vexed disparagement which may be accompanied by displeasure, anger, or contempt, and which is usually addressed to a foolish, thoughtless, or presumptuous person. The insult was regarded as harmless: "blockhead," "donkey." (TDWNT; 4469)

"moros... denotes dull, sluggish (from a root much, to be silly); hence, stupid, foolish... morally worthless, a scoundrel... more serious... than "raka"; the latter scorns a... mind and calls him stupid; MOROS scorns his heart and character;... (Vine Vol. 2 p 114)

Men no longer use "RAKA" / "MOROS" today. But every culture and every language has words of derision, contempt and anger. Below are just a few of the English equivalents to raka/moros:

STUPID!

JERK!

BLOCKHEAD!

DUNCE!

KNUCKLEHEAD!

IDIOT!

FOOL!

BONEHEAD!

IMBECILE!

MORON!

Many today utter these words with the same contempt, derision and disgust as manifested in the original terms! Honest disciples admit that in using such terms they are judging someone's mind and character. They are manifesting derision, disrespect and contempt. When such words come out in anger we are guilty. Jesus disciples are forbidden to hold others in such contempt or to ridicule them. These are not good words. They soil the mouths of those who use them. Such scorn, sarcasm or disdain, violates the intent and purpose of God's Law. These are words of cursing and thus corrupt.

But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? 12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh. James 3:8

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Eph 4:29

Even today we may have heard such words are acceptable, but Jesus **“says”** they are not! He has high expectations that the love that God has given to us, and which He came to reveal will become a part of our own hearts. God wants us to love our fellow man as yourself. Such a love will keep us from the vile and ungodly things anger promotes. The real intent of *“you shall not kill”* is immediate reconciliation and forgiveness.

So we have to seriously consider the progression: *“every one who is **angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; whosoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever says, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire.”***

Jesus placed anger where they placed murder. He then progressed to name calling, revealing that such words led to the council(supreme court) or hell of fire. He never gets to murder, which of course is worse than all the rest.

If Therefore ...

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. Mt. 5:23-26

Jesus now moves to the logical conclusion of the true responsibility of His disciple who wants to do what Jesus says. The term Jesus selected as the conjunction joining the sentences is *“therefore.”*

“oun... a conj. indicating that something follows from another necessarily; ... Hence it is used in drawing a conclusion and connecting sentences together logically, then, therefore, accordingly, consequently, these things being so...” (Thayer, p. 463-464; 3767)

With all the above being true, these words follow necessarily. Since the guilt of murder occurs the moment a frustration with a brother turns to a scorning and bitter anger against him, these words are the logical conclusion. So, *“these things being so”* here is what must be done for *“our righteousness to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.”*

Jesus makes two applications. The first in regard to the feelings of our brother toward us and the second in our feelings toward our brother. If any of our brethren have something against us. In the course of the day, we manage to say or do something that can be offensive, and suddenly when we remember them we cringe or grimace. Jesus knew these moments would happen and He also knew that brother we harmed may be struggling with the consequences. Because of the grave guilt that could be incurred by another brother due to our actions, we need to always be prepared to fix what we have done. Even if we are offering a gift on the altar, this would take precedence! Yet Paul gives us a limit. Sometimes, no matter what we do, they will have aught against us.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Rom 12:18-19

But until we have done all we can we must always be prepared to turn the other cheek, go the second mile and even let ourselves be cheated(Mt. 5:39-42; 1Cor. 6:7-8). All this because we *“love our neighbor as ourselves.”*

Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. 26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny. Mt. 5:25-26

This final section finalizes His thoughts. So many times we think we are in the right in an argument or disagreement. For we can only see our own cause. But when before the judge and with the examination of the neighbor things may turn out far differently than we imagined.

The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him. Pr. 18:17

As Jesus points out the consequences are far too great to risk it. It is better to take wrong and find out later we were in the right than the scenario Jesus posed here. This is Paul's "*why not rather let yourselves be cheated*" (1Cor 6:7-8). If we are wrong in our assessment, the worst outcome will follow so take care of it before it reaches this point.

- 1 What two foundations are laid based on hearing and doing Jesus words?
- 2 How did Jesus preach this sermon that caused the multitude to be astonished?
- 3 What are the two different approaches people take of what Jesus was contrasting?
- 4 Did Jesus start preaching the gospel before or after this sermon?
- 5 Is this sermon an example of how Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom?
- 6 Where is the command "You shall not murder" found?
- 7 What were they being taught about this command?
- 8 At what point does Jesus place the violation of this command?
- 9 How do the two "greatest commands" in the Law relate to emotions rather than deeds?
- 10 What is the main different between anger(*orge*) and wrath(*thumos*)?
- 11 What is anger never to be directed toward?
- 12 What does anger often short circuit in our hearts?
- 13 What emotions keep anger within the fences God created for it?
- 14 What did James say we become if we hate a brother?
- 15 What did the word "*raka*" mean in that day?
- 16 What about the word "*moros*?"
- 17 Do we have equivalent words today?
- 18 List some of these word.
- 19 What word does James use to describe the use of such words against our neighbor?
20. What two applications does Jesus make since anger and words of contempt violate the Law against murder?
21. What should we do when we remember we have done something to someone that hurt them?
22. Even if we believe we are in the right, what is the safest course with all conflicts?