

Exodus pt. 39
Murder and Anger
Exodus 20:13

I. Introduction

- A. As we continue our study of the Ten Commandments we come to the sixth commandment: “You shall not murder.”
- B. I’m hopeful that you do not need to be told not to murder but if you do please listen doubly intently today. Even if you do not have murderous intent please listen closely as we will see that this commandment extends far beyond homicide.

II. What Do these Commandments Teach us about God?

- A. As we have in previous weeks we need to understand the specific details of this commandment before we can answer this question.
 - 1. The sixth commandment is one of the shortest of the 10. “It is just two words in the original: *lo ratzach*, or “Don’t kill.” (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 575)
 - a) There are at least eight Hebrew words for killing with varying different nuances and applications. So what does this specific word mean?
 - b) “The word *ratzach* is never used in the legal system or in the military. [...] Nor is the word [...] used for hunting and killing animals. [...] What the commandment forbids is not killing [in every sense], but the unlawful killing of a human being. [This word] is used for voluntary manslaughter, a crime of passion. It is also used for involuntary manslaughter. [...] It applies to ‘murder in cold blood, manslaughter with passionate rage, [and] negligent homicide resulting from recklessness or carelessness.” (*Preaching the Word: Exodus*, pg. 575 - 576)
 - c) It’s important to note that God says that even deaths caused by neglect are breaches of this commandment. The Law of Moses has several caveats about accidental deaths, even if your animal were to get loose and kill someone.
 - 2. Exceptions to this commandment
 - a) Just wartime killings in a just war
 - (1) I’m stressing the justness of the kill as well as the justness of the war for a reason.
 - (2) Obviously, crimes of war would not be just or necessary usages of force even in a just war. For example, we all would consider the Nazi death camps as being guilty of murder.
 - (3) Secondly, it is important to consider the justness of a war. However, let me be quick to say that the average soldier has no say-so in what wars they fight. This responsibility falls more on the leaders who send troops into combat than the combatants themselves.
 - b) Capital punishment
 - (1) Paul argued that governmental authorities “[are] a minister of God for your good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.” (Romans 13:4)
 - c) Defending innocent life

(1) Another example where killing is justified is when it is necessary to protect innocent life. What the sixth commandment prohibits is killing people in order to destroy. It does not cover killing in order to protect innocent life.

B. What does this commandment teach us about God

1. God Cares about Life

a) But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. (Jeremiah 10:10a)

(1) Remember that the key theme of the Exodus account is that Yahweh is the only Living God, the only True God, the 'I Am.' God is the Living God and He is the God of life.

b) God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)

(1) Why is murder wrong? Because every single person is made in the image of God. Every life is valuable because every life bears the image of God.

(2) Not only that but God's mission for humanity was to create life, to fill the earth with life.

(a) God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth... (Genesis 1:28a)

c) Then the Lord God formed man of dust and ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

(1) What is it that gives us life? God breathes the "breath of life" into us. Murder is to cut that breath of life off from someone made in the image of God.

2. God is Sovereign

a) The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist,... (Acts 17:24 - 28a)

(1) God ordained your existence in this specific time and place of your life. To end a life is to attempt to usurp God's sovereign control of another person's lifespan.

3. God is Just

a) As we have seen all of God's commandments are rooted in His love for His creation and His divine justice. God takes seriously sins committed against people made in His image. Murder is perhaps the greatest sin we could commit against another person.

III. How Do these Commandments Point us to Christ?

A. Jesus Was Murdered

1. “Men of Israel, listen to these words; Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know - this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and **put Him to death**. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.” (Acts 2:22 - 24)
 - a) A couple of Questions are needed here:
 - (1) Was Jesus’ death actually a murder?
 - (a) A moment ago I explained that executions by governmental authorities would not be under the sixth commandment. So since Jesus’ death was such an execution is it then not murder?
 - (b) Peter tells the crowd that they “put [Jesus] to death.” This is the same Greek word that Luke uses in Acts 7 when Stephen is retelling the story of Moses “killing” the Egyptian. So based on that I think it is fair to say that Jesus was, in fact, murdered.
 - (c) Even though His death was an execution it was brought on based on lies and false charges. The religious leaders intentionally plotted against Jesus, bribed false witnesses, and manipulated Pilate who found no fault in the Lord. It is for these reasons that Jesus’ death was actually a murder.
 2. Who is responsible for Jesus’ death?
 - a) God
 - (1) delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God...
 - (2) Jesus’ death was God’s plan. The Prophet Isaiah prophesied about Jesus saying, “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief...” (Isaiah 53:10a)
 - (3) “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so much the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:14 - 17)
 - (4) “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.” (John 12:32 - 33)
 - b) Sinful Men
 - (1) you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and **put Him to death**.
 - (a) Here we see a mystery. How can Peter say in one breath that Jesus’ death was the result of God’s plan and then in the next hold men responsible for putting Him to death? The Bible teaches consistently both that God is sovereign and men are responsible. God has plans and purposes and people make legitimate decisions. In my opinion, this tension is something only God, Himself, fully understands.

- (2) Peter says that Jesus' death was at the hands of "godless men" that is wicked men. God holds them responsible for their role in Jesus' death. If we continue to our third question, "How does this commandment point us to the gospel?" We find that we too are responsible for Jesus' death.

IV. How Do these Commandments Point us to the Gospel?

A. Jesus Died so Sinners Could Live

1. For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:6 - 10)

B. Jesus Demonstrated Self-Sacrificial Love

1. The gospel is a call to die to ourselves. It is the fulfillment of the sixth commandment. Not only should we not seek to harm others we are actually called to follow in Jesus' steps and lay our lives down for others.

a) Our Friends

- (1) "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:12 - 13)
- (2) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:15 - 16)

b) Our Enemies

- (1) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He cause His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:43 - 46)
- (2) Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:18 - 21)
 - (a) The gospel is by its nature all about reconciliation. The gospel reconciles us to God through Jesus' sacrifice. But not only that, the gospel makes us ambassadors of reconciliation. Those who have been reconciled to God are called to help others reconcile to Him.
 - (b) "Are we not destroying our enemies when we befriend them?" (Abe Lincoln)

(c) The gospel is the absolute fulfillment of the sixth commandment. Instead of killing our enemies we are called to bless, serve, and even beg them to be reconciled to Christ. What could be more the opposite of murder than to show our enemies the Way to have eternal life?

(d) Perhaps, a harder question is how does God see it when we are apathetic about the souls of men? To have no care or concern for the souls of men is the worst kind of hatred. Does God see this as spiritual murder?

V. How Do These Commandments Apply to New Testament Believers?

- A. “You have heard that it the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ 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.” (Matthew 5:21 - 22)
1. In Jesus’ view unrighteous anger is the same as murder.
- B. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. (Ephesians 4:26 - 27)

VI. Conclusion and Application