

## The Sixth Commandment - You shall not murder - Exodus 20:13.

Remember that these laws have been given to a REDEEMED people. This is not the checklist for earning righteousness; this is God revealing Himself and his holy character. To live in these statutes is to flourish and thrive, as he is our Redeemer. But it is also to reveal to us the hidden corruptions of our hearts and turn in faith to the One who lived these laws in thought, word, and deed to redeem His people by faith in Him.

The KJV says kill, the ESV says murder. Is there a difference??

Rah tsakh (raw t Shaw)- to put to death, manslayer, murder. To dash to pieces, especially to murder.

Denotes the act of taking human life wrongfully. Scripture consistently treats it as a moral violation that incurs guilt before God, whether done deliberately or through reckless negligence. Think of Cain and Abel - Abel withheld nothing from the Lord in his offering, but Cain did (a form of idolatry), but it was the Lord who spoke to Cain, "Why are you so angry?" Then Cain killed his brother. The Lord asked him, where is your brother?" "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Sounds familiar? Sounds like Adam and Eve at the fall. "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground."

### Legal Elaboration

1. Intentional murder - Numbers 35:16-18 lays out capital punishment. "The murderer is to be put to death." Deliberate killing is viewed as an assault upon the image of God.
2. Unintentional Manslaughter- Numbers 35:22-25 recognizes accidental deaths. "But if anyone pushes a person suddenly without hostility, the congregation must rescue the manslayer. This distinction affirms both justice for the victim and mercy for the unwitting offender.
3. Cities of Refuge - Six Levitical towns (Numbers 35:6; Joshua 20) functioned as sanctuaries where the manslayer could await trial. The institution balanced communal vengeance "the avenger of blood") with due process, foreshadowing the gospel pattern of refuge and atonement.

### Theological Themes

1. Image-bearing Dignity - Human life is uniquely sacred. The prohibition protects the Image Dei - the divine image.

2. Justice and Atonement -  
Bloodguilt defiles the land (Numbers 35:33). Only just retribution or divinely appointed atonement removes the stain, foreshadowing Christ's definitive sacrifice (Hebrews 12:24).
3. Corporate Responsibility - Murder pollutes the community; hence, civil authorities bear the sword to restrain evil. Romans 13:3-4[3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

The sermon on the mount intensifies the command, equating unrighteous anger with murder. 1 John 3:15 states, "whoever hates his brother is a murderer. The cross confronts murder in its most blatant form-the killing of the innocent Son of God-yet provides the refuge that Numbers prefigures

Acts 3:13-15

(13] The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. [14] But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, [15] and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witness.

That's the framework for our thought. Now let's turn to the Westminster Standards for our applications.

Q. 135 - What are the duties required in the Sixth Commandment?

- A. The duties required in the Sixth Commandment are: All careful studies and lawful endeavors, to preserve the lives of ourselves and others. by resisting all thoughts and purposes, subduing all passions, and avoiding all occasions, temptations, and practices that tend to the unjust taking away the life of any; by just defense of life against violence; patient bearing of the hand of God, quietness of mind, cheerfulness of spirit; a sober use of meat, drink, medicine, sleep, labor, and recreation; by charitable thoughts, love, compassion, meekness, gentleness, kindness, peaceable, mild, and courteous speech and behavior, restraint, readiness to be reconciled, patient bearing and forgiving of injuries, and repaying good for evil: comforting and relieving the distressed, and protecting and defending the innocent.

Q. 136 - What are the sins forbidden in the Sixth Commandment?

- A. The sins forbidden in the Sixth Commandment are; all taking away of the lives of ourselves, or of others, except in case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defense; the neglecting or withdrawing of the lawful or necessary means of preservation of life; sinful anger, hatred, envy, desire for revenge, all excessive passions; distracting cares, immoderate use of meat, drink, labor and recreation; provoking words; oppression, quarreling, striking, wounding, and whatever else tends to the destruction of the life of anyone.

A final application:

- Sanctity of Life: Uphold life from conception to natural death, opposing abortion, euthanasia, and all forms of unjust violence.

*John Calvin, from his exposition of Exodus 21:22 written in 1563: "For the fetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being, and it is almost a monstrous crime to rob it of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy. If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a fetus in the womb before it has come to light."*

Calvin argued that the penalty described in the Mosaic law regarding harm to a pregnant woman applies to the baby as well, asserting that human life begins at conception (homo in the womb). A double indemnity.

Martin Luther, in his exposition of the Ten Commandments, spoke of double indemnity. Breaks 2 through 10, and we are also guilty of breaking the first.

- Reconciliation: Encourage restitution and forgiveness for those guilty of violence, affirming that the gospel extends mercy even to murderers (Acts 9:1-19).
- Righteous Justice: Advocate for systems that value every person, mirroring prophetic concern for the defenseless.
- Discipleship: Cultivate hearts free from anger and hatred, the roots of murder, through the transforming work of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).