

**Study Notes: Matthew 5:21-26**  
**April 28, 2024: “Dealing with Anger”**  
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***“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’***

- The next set of teachings in the Sermon on the Mount all began with the same formula. Jesus started by quoting from the Old Testament Law (“You have heard it said”), then elevated and further explained how that teaching must be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God (“but I tell you”).
- Jesus’ first teaching point involved murder and anger. He quoted from the Old Testament Law (Exodus 20:13) regarding murder and facing judgment. The Law stated that murder was forbidden, and anyone who committed murder would face judgment.

***But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.***

- Jesus’ words, “But I tell you,” highlighted His authority and ability to issue commands to His disciples and followers.
- Instead of just focusing on murder, Jesus spoke to the root cause of murder, which was anger. The Greek word used for “anger” is *ogrizo* and refers to anger with contempt that is held onto and not dealt with properly. The New American Commentary notes, “Jesus condemns murder, but he goes on to claim that harboring wrath in one’s heart is also sinful and deserving of punishment (he doesn’t say it is as bad!)”
- Jesus also said that anyone who taunted and called those by derogatory terms would be in danger of the judgment of hell. While these seem like lesser offenses to us, these are outward expressions of the inward contempt and anger, and Jesus said they are still subject to judgment.
  - The Expositor’s Bible Commentary explains, “There is no clear distinction between the person with seething anger, the one who insultingly calls his brother a fool, and the one who prefers, as his term of abuse, ‘Raca’ (transliteration for Aram. *rēkā*, ‘imbecile,’ ‘fool,’ ‘blockhead’).”
- All these statements made by Jesus are a reminder that people in the Kingdom of God cannot hold others in contempt or devalue them in word or action.

***“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.***

- In light of these commands, Jesus stated that we must deal with our interpersonal conflicts quickly.
- The onus is placed on the person who recognizes that someone has something against them. The Pillar New Testament Commentary explains, “It is not enough to control one’s temper (though that is important); one must not arouse other people’s anger.”

- Jesus said these things must be settled even before a person worships or makes an offering to God, which is a reminder that what matters in our worship is the motives and state of our heart, not just our outward actions.

***“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.*”**

- Jesus also spoke about dealing with adversaries personally, rather than depending on the courts to sort things out. If at all possible, Jesus said things should be handled this way, because if the judges and courts were left to sort things out, it may result in prison and fines.
- This teaching highlights and emphasizes the teaching at the beginning of this section. The Faithlife Study Bible notes, “The cases presented in Matt 5:23–24, 25–26 highlight the theme of reconciliation and provide illustrations of the ethic Jesus presents in vv. 21–22. The command to love is the heart of Jesus’ ethical teaching.”
- The Expositor’s Bible Commentary says, “Malicious anger is so evil — and God’s judgment so certain (v. 22) — that we must do all in our power to end it (cf. Eph 4:26–27).”