



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Who is a murderer? Matthew 5:21-26

**Matthew 5:21-26**, *“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.’<sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.<sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.*

- 45% of us regularly lose our temper at work.
- 64% of Britons working in an office have had office rage.

- *33% of us aren't speaking to our next door neighbour, and 5% of us have come to blows with them.*
- *One wife said, "My husband is so temperamental, 50% temper, 50% mental."*
- *27% of nurses have been attacked at work.*
- *85% of us are annoyed by people who answer mobile phones during meetings. So if you aren't the boss – take note!*
- *50% of us have reacted to a computer problem by hitting our PC.*

**V 21,** *"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.'*

### **Where did that come from?**

From **Exodus 20**.

**Genesis 9:6,** *"Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.*

God instituted capital punishment as a penalty for murder. To take the life of a human being is to assault the image of God He created in man, and that brings about serious penalty.

So, Genesis 9 authorizes capital punishment for those who shed blood, because man is made in the image of God.

If you were to study Exodus 20, you would find that the word “you shall not kill,” means “murder.”

It means murder.

It does not refer to capital punishment. That is taking a life under divine allowance. It does not refer to a just war. There were times in God’s economy of Israel. There are times in God’s plan for history when there are conflicts on a national level, carrying out certain exercises of the will of God in judgment upon some nations, where there might be an allowance for killing, and it would not be considered murder.

**Exodus 20** has anything to do with self-defence. We have the right to protect the image of God in our lives, our families, and those about us when they are assaulted and attacked by those who would kill us.

But what the Bible is talking about is murder. Murder planned, plotted to some degree murder.

**Exodus 21:14**, *“But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbour, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die.*

Again, God reiterates the punishment of capital punishment or death for the one who presumptuously comes in a premeditative way to take the life of his neighbour.

**Numbers 35:16-19**, *'But if he strikes him with an iron implement, so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. <sup>17</sup>And if he strikes him with a stone in the hand, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. <sup>18</sup>Or if he strikes him with a wooden hand weapon, by which one could die, and he does die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. <sup>19</sup>The avenger of blood himself shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.*

The society was to protect itself by taking the life of the one who indiscriminately, premeditatively took the life of another.

Deuteronomy chapter 35 to discuss other such situations where murder occurs.

Genesis 4 Cain murders his brother Abel.

From the first human crime, murder, on through the Revelation of God, murder is a biblical issue. Now if we study the Scripture, we know how God feels about it. It is forbidden. It is punishable by death.

We learn other things about murder in the Bible.

We learn that murder is a crime authored by the devil himself.

**John 8:44**, *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

Murder is basically authored by Satan.

**Matthew 15:19**, *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”*

Murders, thefts, and all that other stuff do not happen because of social deprivation. They happen because of a degenerated human heart. Murder does not happen because of stressful situations. It happens because it's authored by Satan himself.

**Romans 1:29**, *being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,*

Man is a murderer because he has a reprobate mind that has been given over to evil because he rejects God. So that murder is a crime authored by the devil. It is a crime that comes out of the evil human heart.

**Galatians 5:21** Paul tells us that murder is an act of the flesh. It is a deed done by unregenerated human nature.

Murder is an abomination to God.

**Proverbs 6:16-17**, *How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. <sup>17</sup>The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who keeps his way preserves his soul.*

Murder is an act of an unregenerated human flesh.

Murder is a manifestation of an evil heart.

Murder is authored by the devil himself.

Murder is punishable by death because it is an intrusion into life, which is created in the image of God.

**Revelation 22:14-15**, *Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. <sup>15</sup>But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

The kingdom of God and the eternal state is not a place for murderers.

The Old Testament lists a lot of murderers.

Cain, Lamech, Pharaoh, Abimelech, Joab, the Amalekites, David, Absalom, Zimri, Jezebel, Jehu, Athaliah, Joash, Manasseh etc.,

The New Testament lists some.

Herod, Judas, and the high priests, Barabbas, Herodias, her daughter etc.,

Biblical history and modern history are literally filled with murderers. From Cain to today, we have had murderers in human society.

For in Matthew 5 through 7, our Lord is addressing the scribes and Pharisees on a hillside in Galilee along with the rest of the multitude. But here in particular, He refers to their approach to life.

At that point the scribes and the Pharisees would have said, "Amen, Amen. We are against murder.

We have been taught by them of old by the rabbinical tradition that murder is an evil thing.

The thought that they did not commit murder was one way in which they convinced themselves they were righteous.

We would not murder.

We would never murder anyone.

Consequently, we must be righteous.

We have kept the law of God, 'you shall not kill.' We wouldn't murder anyone. So, they not murdering anyone was one of their favourite ways to justify themselves.

I don't murder.

I am not that kind of person.

I wouldn't hurt anybody.

We would identify with the Pharisees at that point. But this is precisely where Jesus wants to attack them.

**V 20**, *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.*

How our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

The first one: Murder.

Jesus gives them a teaching here about murder that's literally shocking. It is devastating. It affects them in three ways.

It affects their view of themselves.

It affects their view of God.

It affects their view of others.

What Jesus is going to say is so dramatic it will shatter all their comfortable categories. They had convinced themselves because they didn't kill anybody, they were holy, they were righteous.

**V 21**, *"You have heard that it was said by them of old."*

Jesus here is reminding them of rabbinic tradition.

He is not referring to the law of Moses.

He is not referring to the Word of God.

Judaism, your traditional system, your teaching says, you are not to kill, because if you do you are in danger of judgment. You have been taught that. That is the tradition that's passed down to you.

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus were totally dependent upon this tradition. Because the Old Testament was written in Hebrew. They did not any longer speak Hebrew. Since the Babylonian captivity and following, they spoke Aramaic, and so the Hebrew Scriptures were lost to them. When they came back from captivity, rather than the rabbis and the scribes and the rest of them as the time went on providing a Scripture in their own language, they kept them in ignorance.

So, they couldn't read and understand the Hebrew for themselves.

The rabbis, scribes, and Pharisees, and the others would tell them what it meant. This gave them a tremendous power over the people because the people couldn't verify whether it was true or not.

When they came back from captivity, they picked up the Scripture in Ezra and Nehemiah's time, and they read the Scripture.

**Nehemiah 8:8**, *So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.*

This continued even till Jesus' day. So that the people were not people of the Book. They themselves did not read the Word of God, the Old Testament. They listened to what the traditional rabbis taught, and they twisted and perverted it to their own ends.

But every now and then, the things they taught did have a biblical scriptural base, such as this.

You look at verse 21 again and it says, "Thou shalt not kill." Now you know that is biblical. They were right and got that from Exodus 20.

Jesus uses three illustrations to reveal this sin in **V 22**.

### **1. Judgement**

**V 21**, *“Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment.”*

**V 22**, *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.*

**Numbers 35:30-31**, *Whoever kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the testimony of witnesses; but one witness is not sufficient testimony against a person for the death penalty. <sup>31</sup>Moreover you shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.*

Rabbinic tradition was true. They were right on at this point. It was basically scriptural.

But the point that Jesus is making here is it doesn't go far enough. That much is true, but there's so much more. You have taken part of God's law. You have interpreted it only partially and then satisfied yourself with keeping your partial interpretation, and therefore justifying yourself.

The term “judgment” here refers to the local court. Not full revelation!

Their full interpretation of the 6th commandment of the decalogue was this. Don’t kill because if you do, you will get in trouble with the law.

**But what about God?**

**What about God’s holy character?**

They had made this so mundane they didn’t even mention God. They didn’t even mention divine judgment.

They said nothing about inner attitudes.

They said nothing about the heart.

All they said was, “Don’t murder or you will get in a lot of trouble.” Very superficial.

Their interpretation stopped short and because they didn’t murder and didn’t get in trouble, they decided they were self-righteous, self-justified, perfectly happy about themselves, justified before God.

They forgot to read the rest of the Old Testament. Because the rest of the Old Testament says that God desires truth in the inward parts.

**Psalm 51:6**, *Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.*

**Deuteronomy 6:4-6**, *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! <sup>5</sup>You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*

**Jeremiah 17:10**, *I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.*

The part of God’s law they left out was the internal part. It wasn’t enough for you not to kill. God was concerned about what was going on inside. They had restricted the scope of God’s commandments to an earthly court. They had restricted the scope of God’s commandment to an act of murder.

**V 22**, *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Jesus says, it isn't the issue of murder alone, but the issue of anger and hatred in your heart. You cannot justify yourself because you don't kill.

Because if there is hatred in your heart, you are the same as a murderer.

Jesus swept aside all the rabbinical interpretations, and He put the emphasis where the emphasis belonged. He stripped them of their self-righteousness.

### **Who is a murderer?**

Anybody who is angry with his brother, anybody.

Pretty devastating.

Anger is murder's root, and our Lord says anger and murder merit equal punishment.

Our Lord is saying this, that what's going on in the inside of you is what God judges. You may hate more than a murderer hates. You just don't have an opportunity to kill. Even a less violent hatred than that, even anger with a brother to any degree, is the same in God's eyes as murder.

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

You have hatred then you are a murderer.

In God's eyes, it is no different than a man who goes out and does the crime.

Even the worst of men justify themselves.

Jesus strips us stark naked of our self-righteousness.

Psychologists tell us that hate brings you nearer to murder than any other emotion. Hate is merely the extension of anger. Anger, hatred, leads to murder. It is the common source of killing.

Hatred and anger can even kill you because it can eat you alive on the inside.

Jesus strikes hard to show us that even the best of men, if the truth were known, are the worst of men.

We think that because we don't commit these kinds of crimes that we are righteous before God, and Jesus says, "If you have ever been angry or hated, you are a murderer."

There is a righteous anger that is not what Jesus means here. When Jesus took a cord and started throwing people around. There are times when the vengeance of God bursts loose, and people lose their lives for a time at eternity.

There are times when a believer has a right to be angry. Which we looked at last week. Whenever the name and the glory of God is blasphemed you are right to be angry!

**Ephesians 4:26**, *“Be angry, and sin not.”*

There is a right kind of anger. We looked at it last week. But here Jesus is talking about selfish anger. You are angry with a brother. Something has happened and you are really hopping mad.

When you hold a grudge and bitterness against somebody then you are guilty. Jesus says that you deserve the same judgment. If you are angry with your brother, you are in danger of judgment. There shouldn't be any difference.

By the way, the judgment at the end of verse 21 that the civil court would give would be execution. Jesus says the same thing right here. If you are angry, you are in danger of execution.

Capital punishment should belong to you for anger just as much as for murder.

It isn't what we do so much as what we are and what we feel.

I don't know a civil court in the world that would give the death penalty to somebody for getting angry. They may give it throughout history for murder, but not for anger.

But if God's calling the verdicts, and God's sitting on the throne, He is saying in effect that the one who is angry is as guilty as the one who kills.

## **2. Despising word**

**V 22**, *And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council.*

### **What does this mean?**

This person is also condemned as a murderer. This is another person who ought to go before the council and get the same death penalty.

There ought to be the same penalty for saying 'Raca' to somebody.

Now Raca is very hard to translate. It is an untranslated epithet. It doesn't mean anything. It was sort of a term of derision that doesn't really translate. It meant something in that time and they all knew what it meant. It is a malicious term.

Some have said it means “brainless idiot.”

Some have said it means “worthless fellow, silly fool, empty head, blockhead, rockhead.”

It is a verbal expression of slander against the person.

Maybe more directed toward his personality, and toward something in his character, or something in his looks.

It is a word of despising.

In our language it is different, but it’s basically the same thing, or he can do the same thing by making gestures with his hand or whatever. It’s the same thing.

It’s the poison under the tongue.

**Matthew 27:29**, *“they bowed the knee before him, and they mocked him.”*

It is a word used by someone who despises another.

Contempt, says our Lord, is murder in the heart, and the death penalty is equally deserved.

Beloved, what Jesus is saying is what you feel inside is enough to damn you to eternal hell as much as what you do on the outside.

### 3. Fool

**V 22**, *But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Apparently, this was even a worse thing to say to somebody.

It appears there is a rising level. If you notice the word **mros**, from which we get moron, comes apparently from a Hebrew root, **marah**.

**'marah'** means to rebel.

In the Hebrew Bible, a fool was one who rebelled against God.

To call someone a rebel against God you did him a favour. But if you are doing it as hatred, then it is a sin.

#### **The difference:**

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You fools" you **mros**.

Only it wasn't wrong for Him to say it because it was true.

They were fools.

They had rebelled against God.

**Psalms 53:1**, *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity; There is none who does good.*

The fool lives a life set against God. He lives a life of self-will, and self-design, and you do a man a favour to go and say, "You are a fool to live like that."

Jesus' walking on the road to Emmaus.

**Luke 24:25**, *Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"*

What Jesus is trying to do is to destroy the system of self-righteousness.

The word "hell fire" is a very serious word.

The Greek word translated "hell" here is the word '**gehenna**'.

Gehenna is a word with a history. Gehenna is used and translated "hell" very commonly.

**Matthew 5:22, 29, 30,**

**Matthew 10:28,**

**Matthew 18:9, 23:15, and 23:33,**

**Mark 9, Luke 12.**

**Gehenna** is a reference to Hinnom, it means the valley of Hinnom.

It is southwest from Jerusalem, and it is there today.

It was the place where Ahaz had introduced into Israel the fire worship of the heathen god Molech to whom little children were burned in the fire.

**2 Chronicles 28:3**, *He burned incense in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel.*

Josiah the reforming king had stamped out the evil worship of Molech in the place of Hinnom and ordered that the valley should be forever after an accursed place. Because of what had gone on, because it had been defiled, because in the valley, there had been the fire of Molech.

Consequence of this, the valley of Hinnom bore that curse throughout all of Israel's history. It became a place where the Jewish people dumped their garbage. The valley of Hinnom was the garbage dump of Jerusalem.

What they had there was a public furnace that burned all the time, never went out.

When Jesus referred to ***gehenna*** or hell and described the eternal state of the wicked as Gehenna. Jesus was saying that it is an eternal, never ending fire, in an accursed place, where the rubbish of humanity will burn and be consumed.

Jesus says if you are even angry and if you ever say a malicious word to sort of put down some person, or worse than that if you ever cursed them as it were to hell, you are as guilty and as liable for eternal hell as a murderer is.

Jesus attacks the sin of anger, the sin of slander, and the sin of cursing, and with it He destroys their self-righteousness.

**V 23-24**, *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

Jesus moves from the Pharisees, and the scribes, and the people to Himself.

For us, He takes us to the area of worship.

Worship was a major issue with scribes and Pharisees.

Their whole life was worship. They were in the temple all the time doing their thing, worshiping God, making sacrifices, carrying out the law. Their life was a circumscribed life of worship. But our Lord here condemns that very worship.

Reconciliation comes before worship.

Every Jew would understand this scene. The Jews knew the standard of worship. The idea of sacrifice for them was obvious, very simple.

### **What happens when a man commits sin?**

A breach came between himself and God.

The relation was disturbed.

### **How was that to be remedied?**

It was to be remedied by a contrite and broken heart, and a man was to confess his sin, and a man was to manifest repentance, contrition, and brokenness.

Then in order to manifest outwardly that inward feeling, he was to bring an animal as a sacrifice.

The animal wasn't the issue but the attitude.

Obedience in the heart is better than sacrifice.

The sacrifice was merely an outward symbol of a repentant obedient heart. When the breach came, and the man repented and in sorrow asked forgiveness, and set things right with God, he then brought a sacrifice.

Jew is coming to worship brings his own sacrifice and offers the sacrifice to the priest. He walks through the outer part of the courtyard, then the inner part, and finally to the court of

the priests and he must stop there because he can't enter. Only the priests could go in there.

So, he takes the sacrifice and gives it to the priest, and then he's to lay his hands on it to identify with it. The priest takes it in and makes the sacrifice.

The man gets all the way there, and he has got the thing in the hands of the priest, and he puts his hands on it, and the identification is going on.

Suddenly Jesus is saying to him, "Stop right there. You remember you have your brother has something against you. Leave that altar. Don't make that sacrifice until you make things right with your brother. Settle the breach between man and man before you settle the breach between man and God."

This isn't anything new.

They knew this.

This had always been God's standard.

**Isaiah 1:11-17**, *"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" Says the Lord. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. <sup>12</sup>"When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts? <sup>13</sup>Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the*

*Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies— I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. <sup>14</sup>Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. <sup>15</sup>When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. <sup>16</sup>“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup>Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; Defend the fatherless, Plead for the widow.*

In other words, deal with your brother, and then deal with Me.

**Isaiah 58:5-7**, *Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord? <sup>6</sup>“Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? <sup>7</sup>Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh?*

In other words, don't come to Me with your false worship until you have met the need of your brother.

That's what our Lord is saying. This isn't anything new to them. They knew the breach between a man and a man came before the breach between God and a man could rightfully be settled.

**Jeremiah 7:9-11**, *Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, <sup>10</sup>and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations'? <sup>11</sup>Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it," says the Lord.*

Get out of here, until you make right the relationships.  
The picture is very vivid.

Go away. Go away until it's right with your brother.  
That is what the Lord is saying.

**V 23**, *Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,*

It is not even that you are angry, but that he is angry at you!  
Amazing!

How important it is that we have right relations?

In **V 22** Jesus says that if you are angry then you are in danger of condemnation.

In **V 23** Jesus says that if anybody is angry at you then I don't want your worship.

*Go away. Leave your gift, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

Our Lord shows His holiness in the fact that He's not even dealing with the anger of the one worshipping. That was dealt with in verse 22. He is dealing now with anger against the worshiper.

You know you may know that somebody's upset at you.  
You may know that somebody has something against you.  
You may not feel anger toward them.

God doesn't want you angry.  
God doesn't want anybody angry with you.  
That is rendering you guilty of murder.

If you want to enhance worship, then everybody who's got something against a brother, leave. Come back when it's right. Then we will see the power of the Spirit of God in our midst.

Very very tough!

I believe that there are times when we come to church and there is a feeling against somebody else in the fellowship, or a neighbour in the street or somewhere, and we know there's a bitterness. We do absolutely nothing about it.

The Bible says, "Go away. You offer nothing to God. He is not interested in your worship."

**Psalm 66:18**, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

**1 Samuel 15:22**, *So Samuel said: "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams."*

How do I find that person who's angry with me?

There are people angry with me. I don't even know it. I can't run around just asking everybody.

There are other times when I know somebody's angry with me and I try to reconcile with them, and I do my best, and I ask their forgiveness, and I try to make it right, and they don't forgive me. But I've done the best I can. There's nothing more I can do. Then I am free to worship God.

I try to be reconciled with some people.  
It's very hard.

There are some people I should reconcile with, but I don't even know that they feel that way.

When I do know it and when I can do something I must, says Jesus. They affect our own self-righteousness, and they affect our worship of Him.

Finally, they affect our relations with others. Jesus gives a specific example.

**V 25-26**, *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. <sup>26</sup>Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.*

The imagery of our Lord is graphic.

Jesus is saying you better go and get it right with your brother. Jesus uses an illustration borrowed from the old legal method of dealing with debtors in Jewish society. The idea is that you are here worshipping, and you have got a debt. It has come to the place where you are being dragged into court over this debt.

Immediately time for reconciliation. Because tomorrow maybe too late is the implication. You will be cast into prison,

and you will have to be stuck there without the possibility of ever paying back that debt, and it will be too late.

Jesus moves to deal with the factor of guilt. There may be guilt on both sides, but the guilty party is in view, if it's both or if it's one.

Settle your case out of court. That is what He is saying. Don't let this thing continue and until you are on your way to court, and then somebody will lose and get thrown into prison, and never be able to pay it back.

In Jewish law when a man was adjudged guilty and he was adjudged to be the debtor, he was handed over to the court officer. The court officer tries to exact from the individual the payment to the creditor. The adjudication says that this man must pay this man so much. The court officer takes the man who defaults, puts him in prison.

He must stay in prison till he can pay it back. The point is if you are in prison, you can't ever pay it back. Can't be done. Jesus here is saying, settle it out of court, reconcile before it's severe judgment and you can't reconcile at all.

### **What does Jesus mean here?**

- a) Time will come when the person dies and will never made it, be able to reconcile.

b) Time will come when God chastens you and judge you, and it will be too late.

Possibly both of those things.

Jesus doesn't explain that.

You can't worship Me unless your relations are right.

So, hurry and make them right. Don't let them go to the place where there will be a civil judgment made and somebody loses in the end.

Don't let it go to the place where God in, in judgment, moves in. Act before then.

Jesus saying that God is the real judge, and hell is the real punishment.

If you don't make things right, you may find yourself in an eternal hell with a debt that never could be paid.

Pharisees and scribes who are depending on their own self-righteousness, just because they don't kill, they think that they are holy.

But Jesus tells them that if you are angry, if you have ever said a malicious word about somebody's character, if you have ever cursed anybody, you are like a murderer.

If you have ever come to an altar to worship God and had something against your brother, you are in danger of such judgment, such hypocrisy would be enacted in your worship that you leave that gift and run to make it right.

When you get into a conflict with somebody, immediately, as fast as you can, resolve that issue because you, too, are in danger of hell.

The fact that you don't murder is a little piece of the iceberg. You have got grudges that you have never settled. You worship in hypocrisy. You curse. You malign. You are angry.

The same judgment comes upon you for that.  
Death and hell are what you deserve.  
That is what Jesus is saying.

### **Who is a murderer?**

Ask yourself, who is a murderer?

Have you ever been angry?

You ever called anybody a name?

Maybe your wife or husband or child?

Somebody under your breath?

Have you ever cursed anybody?

Have you ever come to church to worship while you had bitterness in your heart?

Such hypocrisy.

Have you ever had a grudge with somebody, and you dragged it all the way to the court, and you never settled it?

Then you are the same as a murderer because you allowed conflict, bitterness, hatred, and anger to enter into your heart.

**Who deserves death and hell?**

You do,

I do, we are all guilty of murder.

We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God.

**What is the wages of sin?**

Death.

**How do we escape?**

If we are all murderers and no murderer will inherit the kingdom,

We have all worshiped in hypocrisy.

We have all been angry.

We have all said malicious things.

We have all thought a curse or said a curse.

We have all been unreconciled to a brother.

**What are we going to do?"**

Jesus wants to drive them to the fact that they cannot be righteous on their own, which will drive them to their knees at

the foot of the cross to accept the imputed righteousness that only Jesus Christ can give.

Everything that Jesus says here is to drive them to frustration and inadequacy so that they come to Him.

He died our death.

He entered our hell that we might have righteousness.

We deserve death.

We deserve hell.

We are all murderers.

All the Pharisees were, the scribes were, and everybody is, and so Jesus went to the cross, died our death, suffered our hell, and offers us the gift of His own righteousness.

God had every reason to be angry with us.

God had every reason to hate us, righteously to hate us.

God had every reason to hold us in contempt.

God had every reason to curse us, righteously.

God had every reason to send us away because we were murderers.

Even though we are murders and slanderous,

God loves us,

He forgives us,

He pays our debt, and  
He seeks to reconcile us to Himself in His eternal kingdom  
because He wants to have fellowship with us.

If an absolutely holy God can so desire to be reconciled to vile  
murderers like us, can we find it in our hearts to be reconciled  
to our brothers?