

a sermon: EXODUS 20:13 – The Sixth Commandment

THOU SHALT NOT MURDER!

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3/16/2007 AD

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I. A PROPOSITION – A HEART THAT LOVES THE LORD...

The man whose heart learns to love The Lord JESUS CHRIST as He loves us is a man whose heart is far from the sin of bloody murder against his neighbour!

II. THE TEXT – EXODUS 20:13 – THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

In The New King James, "You shall not murder!"¹ In The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, תִּרְצַח לֹא² - LO' TIRETSTSACH!³

III. THAT MEN SHOULD HAVE MORE CHRISTIAN LOVE

In a sermon entitled "Growth in Grace," the Reverend Charles Spurgeon once offered this story: "An old Scotch Elder had been disputing with his Minister at an Elder's meeting. He said some hard things, and almost broke the Minister's heart... Next morning ...[the Elder's] wife said to him, "Eh, Jan! Ye look very sad this morning. What's the matter wi' ye?" "Ah!" said he, "you would be sad, too, if you had had such a dream as I've had... I dreamed I had been at an Elder's meeting, and I said some hard things and grieved the Minister; and as he went hame I thought he died and went to Heaven. A fortnight after, I thought I died, and that I went to Heaven too. And when I got to the gates of Heaven, out came the Minister and put out his hand to take me, saying, 'Come along, Jan, there's nae strife up here, and I'm happy to see ye!'"⁴

Spurgeon continues his story: Waking from this dream, "The Elder went to the Minister to beg his pardon directly, but he found he was [indeed] dead; and he laid it so to heart that within a fortnight the Elder himself departed [from this world]. And I should not wonder if ...[this Elder] did not [indeed] meet the Minister at Heaven's gates, and hear him say, 'Come along, Jan! There's nae strife up here!'" What are we to note here from this sermon's tale? As Spurgeon himself comments directly, "Glorified saints [in Heaven] have not strife among themselves; and we [His saints on earth] should love one

¹ NKJ, EXODUS 20:13.

² BHS, EXODUS 20:13.

³ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter aleph as '.

⁴ 3, Spurgeon's Sermons, Volumes 5-6, a sermon: Growth in Grace, "If we would grow also in the grace of brotherly kindness, we must know more of CHRIST..." page 332.

another more in brotherly kindness if we thought more of Heaven and more of our Blessed [Saviour] JESUS [CHRIST]!”⁵

IV. DID YOU NOTICE? WE OPEND WITH THE NEW KING JAMES!

“But wait, Sir!” you may cry, “How is it that you do not offer us The King James Version here directly, as you always do?” Do not all English translations give us, as does The New King James, “You shall not murder?”⁶ No, for The King James Version translation renders The Six Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill!”⁷ “What Sir,” you may say, “Do other English translations say here?” Consider for yourself: The New American Bible reads here, ““You shall not kill!”⁸ But The Young’s Literal Translation brings us back to, “Thou dost not murder!”⁹ While The New Jerusalem Bible spins us back to, “You shall not kill!”¹⁰ “What then, Sir,” you may plead, “is the accurate rendering of These Words of GOD through Moses to us in the English tongue? And what, if any, is the difference between ‘murder’ and ‘kill?’” Ladies and gentlemen, you ask well! Let us see if we can not unravel both the words and the heart of the matter!

V. THE FIRST MURDER – “CAIN, WHAT HAST THOU DONE?”

Who was the first murderer, if not Cain, who slew in his jealous wrath his innocent and righteous brother Abel? So we read in GENESIS 4:9-10, “And The LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper? And He said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto Me from the ground!”¹¹ What led Cain to murder his brother? If we go back in GENESIS 4, we find that Abel’s sacrifice offered up to The LORD was found acceptable, while Cain’s was not, a matter of the heart behind the sacrifices! Therefore we read in GENESIS 4:5-7, “...Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And The LORD

⁵ 3, Spurgeon’s Sermons, Volumes 5-6, a sermon: Growth in Grace, page 332.

⁶ NKJ, EXODUS 20:13.

⁷ 4, KJV, EXODUS 20:13.

⁸ 5, NAB, EXODUS 20:13.

⁹ 7, YLT, EXODUS 20:13.

¹⁰ 6, NJB, EXODUS 20:13.

¹¹ 4, KJV, GENESIS 4:9-10.

said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...!”¹²

We may note here these points: First, that Cain’s heart was filled with envy, malice and hatred towards his brother Abel. Second, Abel was innocent of any offense against his brother Cain. Third, the hatred in Cain’s heart both preceded him and led him into the sin of taking his innocent brother’s life. Fourth, the righteous shed blood of innocent Abel cried up from the ground to The Almighty. Fifth, this was not one man killing another man, as in some justifiable defense of himself and his loved ones against imminent lethal attack by an evil man. No! This was murder, bloody murder, vicious murder so foul! And before sin brought forth its foul fruit of murder, it was at first crouching at the door of Cain’s heart!

VI. A MATTER OF DEFINITION – TO KILL VERSUS TO MURDER

Here we must now discern the difference between the two – to kill versus to murder. Webster’s Dictionary of The English Language gives us this definition for the verb “to kill” – “to cause to die ...[or] be destroyed; ...the act of ...[terminating the life of a living thing], especially ...animals.”¹³ What then is “murder?” It is “the unlawful killing of a human being with malice [and premeditated] aforethought.”¹⁴ Fausset’s Bible Dictionary gives us deeper insight into what constitutes “murder.” Murder is “in The Scripture view an outrage or sacrilege ...[against] GOD's Likeness in man...” Why? Because “GOD's Image implies in man a personal, moral, and responsible will. To cut short ...[a man's] day[s] of grace and probation [given to him by The Almighty] is the greatest wrong to man and [greatest] insult to his Maker...”¹⁵ Keil and Delitzsch observe that The Sixth Commandment not merely forbids the act of bloody murder, but also “...every act that endangers human life, whether it arises from carelessness... or wantonness, or from hatred, anger and revenge... because ...[human life] is the basis of

¹² 4, KJV, GENESIS 4:5-7.

¹³ 8, Noah Webster’s Dictionary, verb “kill,” entry 1,2,7,8, page 501.

¹⁴ 8, Noah Webster’s Dictionary, verb “murder,” entry 1, page 597.

¹⁵ 9, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, “2528 Murder,” entry 2528.01.

human existence, and in the life [of man] the personality is attacked, and in that The Image of GOD [Himself]!”¹⁶ Such are the affronts of murder!

Human life is in fact so precious in The LORD’s eyes that He has proclaimed for the murderer of man in EXODUS 9:6, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in The Image of GOD made He man!”¹⁷ So Fausset continues, “...the murderer's punishment ...[can only be] death’ ...life must go for life, blood for blood.” And where does murder arise from in men? “...from the instigation of satan the murderer of Adam's and Eve's souls, [the murder of] Abel's body [and the father of all lies] from the beginning ...[as in JOHN 8:44]!”¹⁸

Further, before The Judgement Seat of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, “Not only the ...[actual premeditated malicious slayer] but the hater is a murderer before GOD!”¹⁹ To have one’s heart drenched with hatred against a brother is as breaking The Sixth Commandment as much as if one’s hand in bloody murder steals away the life of that brother! So Saint John echoes what our Blessed Saviour JESUS CHRIST proclaimed as in I JOHN 3:15, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him!”²⁰

VII. A MATTER OF MURDER – OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLES

So we may see from The Old Testament these examples what is meant “to kill:” In GENESIS 3:21 GOD made animal skins for Adam and Eve in The Garden after The Fall to cover their nakedness and shame, requiring the taking of the killing of animals. This was not murder! In EXODUS 12:21 The Passover lamb was killed according to GOD’s instructions.²¹ Neither was this murder! In DEUTERONOMY 13:6-10 the people of GOD are commanded to kill with stones any Israelite, even the closest loved one, who would seek to entice them away from the worship of The LORD, Who alone is The Source and Sustainer of human life both now and forever.²² And no, this was not

¹⁶ 10, Keil and Delitash, Commentary on The Old Testament, Volume 1, The Pentateuch, THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES, CHAP. XX, Vers. 13-17, page 123.

¹⁷ 4, KJV, GENESIS 9:6.

¹⁸ 4, KJV, I JOHN 3:15.

¹⁹ 9, Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, “2528 Murder,” entry 2528.01.

²⁰ 4, KJV, I JOHN 3:15.

²¹ 4, KJV, EXODUS 12:21.

²² 4, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 13:6-10.

murder! In JUDGES 16:30 Samson killed in his own death many Philistines, who were the enemies of GOD and cruel oppressors GOD's people. Nor was this murder! In I SAMUEL 17:50 David killed Goliath!²³ This was not murder either!

Having already visited the damnable deed of the first murderer Cain, we may turn to The New Testament for some stunning examples of "murder:" In MARK 15:7 the cutthroat Barabbas who was freed by Pilate in the place of CHRIST was a bloody man "...who had committed murder in the insurrection" against the Romans.²⁴ Barabbas was a coldblooded murderer of the innocent and the righteous! And when some of the people cried before the Roman Governor to execute The Messiah JESUS CHRIST in LUKE 23:21, His blood was indeed upon their heads! For they cried out, "...Crucify Him, crucify Him!"²⁵ When The Lord died, they were guilty of bloody murder! And recall that even the pagan Pilate responded to the hateful crowd in LUKE 23:21, "...Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him..."²⁶ Nonetheless, to please them and serve himself, Pilate gave the order to crucify The Lamb of GOD, JESUS CHRIST. That was indeed murder!

VIII. UNDERSTANDING WHAT THE HEBREW TEXT SAYS

Now of our Hebrew text: לֹא תִרְצַח לֹא²⁷ - LO' TIRETSTSACH!²⁸ Here we have a negative imperative, where the verb "You murder!" is preceded by the negative particle לֹא LO', thus rendering The Command, "Not you will murder!" The verb itself, from רָצַח RATSACH, is given in the ongoing sense, in that the negative command here continues from the present into the incomplete future in its force and effect.²⁹

²³ 1, NKJ, I SAMUEL 17:50.

²⁴ 4, KJV, MARK 15:7.

²⁵ 4, KJV, LUKE 23:21.

²⁶ 4, KJV, LUKE 23:21.

²⁷ 2, BHS, EXODUS 20:13.

²⁸ In my transliteration of The Hebrew, I represent the letter aleph as '.

²⁹ 11, BLB Hebrew/Greek Lexicon, EXODUS 20:13, Strong's 07523, verb רָצַח RATSACH - to murder; to slay; to kill in a premeditated [manner or] as avenger - 2nd person masculine singular qal [active] imperfect. The sense is in negative imperative - the command being preceded by the negative particle לֹא LO' - "Not you will murder." The action is in the imperfect, its effect and force ongoing from the present into the distant future. The Commandment is addressed personally to "You" in the 2nd person masculine singular.

Men are commanded not “to murder; to slay; to kill in a premeditated [manner] as avenger” their fellow man!³⁰ So the meaning of This Command is not merely, “Thou shalt not kill,” for this is too weak a translation. The proper English translation from GOD through Moses to us is “Thou shalt not murder!”

Shortly after the giving of The Ten Commandments, Moses writes by GOD’s inspiration in EXODUS 23:7, “...the innocent and righteous slay thou not...!”³¹ Why is the intentional and unjustified slaying of the innocent and the righteous forbidden by The Creator? And why is The Sixth Commandment repeated so soon in this form after Israel had received The Ten Commandments? Because, as all men are made in GOD’s Image, all human life is precious before the eyes of The LORD! After the right worship of The Almighty, the respect for the sanctity of human life is central to the righteous and peaceful existence of mankind. So The Catechism of The Catholic Church declares that murder is innately wrong because “...it is gravely contrary to the dignity of the human being, to The Golden Rule,³² and to the holiness of The Creator!”³³

Why does GOD warn of this sin murder in this way, which is forever crouching at the door of every heart filled with hatred? It is so because “every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred... [for every] human person has been willed ...[into existence by the very breath of The LORD] in the [very] image and likeness of The living and holy GOD!”³⁴ The human heart filled with anger for another becomes blind to the Divinely ordained and created worth of those whom it hates. Therefore it is prone to being tempted into the murder of those whom it hates. But what The Almighty has declared as most precious in His sight, shall mere men dare to destroy? GOD forbid, literally!

³⁰ 11, BLB Hebrew/Greek Lexicon, EXODUS 20:13, Strong’s 07523, verb **רָצַח** RATSACH – to murder...

³¹ 4, KJV, EXODUS 23:7.

³² The Golden Rule, which says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!” This is derived from MATTHEW 7:12, which reads in The New King James Version, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

³³ 13, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 2261, page 603.

³⁴ 13, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 2319, page 617.

IX. THE RESTRAINT OF THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT UPON MEN

Let us first observe that The Ten Commandments are universally unshakable Absolutes, not because they were merely good ideas by well meaning men of old, but because GOD – The Creator of all things and Who made man in His own Image – commands them! EXODUS 20:1 precedes The Ten Commandments themselves with these words, “And God spake all these words, saying,”³⁵ The ancient Israelites saw and heard The LORD’s Presence at Mount Sinai when The Ten Commandments were given to them via Moses. Here then is yet another reason to not murder – GOD commands it!

Let us second observe that keeping The Law of GOD has always been both a matter of outward action and of the inward heart, the core of which is love. So Moses writes in LEVITICUS 19:17-18, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart... Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself...!”³⁶ So when the Israelites beheld The LORD’s Presence and heard His voice thundering from atop Mount Sinai, Moses assured them in EXODUS 20:20, “...Fear not: for GOD is come to prove you; and that His fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not!”³⁷

As Keil and Delitzsch offer, that proving is a “...testing of the state of the heart in relation to GOD... By this terrible day of His glory, GOD desired to inspire ...[His people] with the true fear [and reverence] of Himself [and His Laws], that they might not sin through distrust, disobedience or resistance to His guidance and commands!”³⁸ This requires a humble heart before The Almighty that is free of hatred against GOD and man, and that instead loves both its Creator and neighbour! Only such a heart is capable, by GOD’s Grace, of fulfilling all The Law and the prophets in The Two Great Commandments. So our Lord JESUS CHRIST commands us in MATTHEW 22:36-40 that The First Great Commandment is to love GOD with all our heart, soul and mind; that The Second Great Commandment is “...like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?”³⁹

³⁵ 4, KJV, EXODUS 20:1.

³⁶ 4, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:17-18.

³⁷ 4, KJV, EXODUS 20:20.

³⁸ 10, Keil and Delitasch, Commentary on The Old Testament, Volume 1, The Pentateuch, THE SECOND BOOK OF MOSES, CHAP. XX, Vers. 13-17, page 124.

³⁹ 4, KJV, MATTHEW 22:39.

Now we may better understand why John Wesley declares that The Sixth Commandment means "...Thou shalt not do any thing hurtful to the health, or life of thy own body, or any other's. This doth not forbid our own necessary defence, or the magistrates putting offenders to death; but it forbids all malice and hatred to any, for he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and all revenge arising therefrom; likewise anger and hurt said or done, or aimed to be done in a passion..." is poison to the hearts of men.

⁴⁰ It leads to hatred towards both to our Creator and to our fellow man. Such pollution of our souls inwardly leads us outwardly to rebellion against GOD and murder of our neighbour!

X. THEREFORE THE HEART THAT HATES IS A HEART PRONE TO MURDER

In The Sermon on The Mount, our Lord JESUS CHRIST warns of the results of evil intentions of hatred in the heart that may lead to a man murdering his neighbour. So we read in MATTHEW 5:21-22, "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.' 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!" ⁴¹

"Raca" is a noun translated into The Greek New Testament as ῥακά, ⁴² meaning "empty-headed fool." ⁴³ The word used in The Greek New Testament here for "You fool!" is the adjective "moray" μωρέ, ⁴⁴ meaning "foolish" as applied to describe that man's state of being in his character and thus his very soul! ⁴⁵ So to insult a brother in The Lord by calling him ῥακα is to merely insult his reputation before men. But to call a brother μωρε is to make judge his soul and to apply the punishment of death that only

⁴⁰ 12, John Wesley's Explanatory Notes, EXODUS 20:13.

⁴¹ 1, NKJV Bible, MATTHEW 5:21-22.

⁴² 14, BGT, MATTHEW 5:22.

⁴³ 14, BGT, Barklay-Newman Greek Morphology [UBS], Raka ῥακά - a term of strong abuse meaning "empty-headed fool," Greek noun vocative masculine singular common.

⁴⁴ 14, BGT, MATTHEW 5:22.

⁴⁵ 14, BGT, Barklay-Newman Greek Morphology [UBS], Moros μωρός - a term here used as the adjective Moray μωρέ, meaning "foolish," Greek adjective normal vocative masculine singular no degree

GOD Himself is entitled to pronounce upon men! Such are the things that spring forth from a heart heavy with hatred!

John Wesley observes here that we are not to be angry against our brother without cause, for "...the scribes and Pharisees themselves said as much as this. Even they taught, men ought not to be angry without a cause... But CHRIST teaches, that we ought not, for any cause, to be so angry as to call any man Raca, or fool. We ought not, for any cause, to be angry at the person of the sinner, but at his sins only."⁴⁶ For to call a brother "fool" is to so "revile, or seriously reproach" a man as to usurp GOD's seat of judgement from Where only a man's soul may be judged. Such animosity in our hearts negates our duty to love our neighbour as GOD loves us, setting the seeds for the physical act of murder.

XI. JESUS CHRIST PURGES THE HEART OF HATE AND FILLS IT WITH LOVE

Our Saviour JESUS CHRIST teaches us in JOHN 13:34, "A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."⁴⁷ For if a man loves his neighbour, he is not likely to murder him. As The Catechism of The Catholic Church states, "...The Law of The Gospel [of CHRIST] fulfills The Commandments of The Law [of Moses]. The Lord's Sermon on The Mount, far from abolishing or devaluing the moral prescriptions of The Old [Testament] Law ...does not add new external precepts, but proceeds to reform the heart, the root of human acts, where man chooses between ...[good and evil], where faith, hope and ...[love] are formed, ...through imitation of the perfection [and love] of The Heavenly Father..."⁴⁸ Saint John echoes The Words of our Redeemer JESUS CHRIST in I JOHN 4:8, "He that loveth not knoweth not GOD; for GOD is love!"⁴⁹

The heart of The Law of GOD is love, as Saint Paul says in ROMANS 13:8-10, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled The Law, For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not ...[murder],⁵⁰ Thou

⁴⁶ 12, John Wesley's Explanatory Notes, MATTHEW 5:22.

⁴⁷ KJV Bible, JOHN 13:34.

⁴⁸ Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1968, page 531-532.

⁴⁹ KJV, I JOHN 4:8.

⁵⁰ As we have seen, the more correct rendering of The Sixth Commandment from The Hebrew text into English is "Thou shalt not murder!" – not "Thou shalt not kill!"

shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of The Law!”⁵¹ The Messiah JESUS CHRIST, and He only, purges the human heart of its hatred for one’s neighbour and your remove the danger of him murdering his fellow man!

XII. IN CONCLUSION

As we began, so we shall end. Recall our proposition: The man whose heart learns to love The Lord JESUS CHRIST as He loves us is a man whose heart is far from the sin of bloody murder against his neighbour! Indeed, we have seen The Truth that our Redeemer JESUS CHRIST, by The HOLY SPIRIT, works in the human heart, to purge it of evil intent and drive inward The Law of GOD. As we read in ROMANS 13:10, “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of The Law!”⁵² Only then – if men turn to The Saving Faith in The Son of GOD JESUS CHRIST - may we have a land in which all men shall live The Sixth Commandment, not only externally stamped upon them from without, but reigning internally from within their hearts in GOD’s love!

Recall also how we early on considered the sermon by the Reverend Charles Spurgeon. Let us recall his words: “Glorified saints [in Heaven] have not strife among themselves; and we [His saints on earth] should love one another more in brotherly kindness if we thought more of Heaven and more of our Blessed [Saviour] JESUS [CHRIST]!”⁵³

O GOD, that all men might come to believe in their hearts, confess with their mouths and live out in their actions The Divine Truth, That JESUS CHRIST is Lord! O Dear Saviour, that we as Christians may boldly go forth in this dark world, by Your indwelling Spirit, guiding hand and loving Grace, to preach The Gospel to all the ends of the earth! For then all men would know from within their hearts to keep This precious

⁵¹ KJV, ROMANS 13:8-10.

⁵² KJV, ROMANS 13:10.

⁵³ Spurgeon’s Sermons, Volumes 5-6, a sermon: Growth in Grace, “If we would grow also in the grace of brotherly kindness, we must know more of CHRIST....” page 332.

Commandment, “Thou shalt not murder!”⁵⁴ In The Name of GOD The Father, and The Son and The Holy Ghost, AMEN!

⁵⁴ As we have seen, the more correct rendering of The Sixth Commandment from The Hebrew text into English is “Thou shalt not murder!” – not “Thou shalt not kill!”

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