

# FIRM FOUNDATIONS

## Study #6 (Updated 8-11-17)

### Read Matt. 5:21-26 (NIV)

*"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.' <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*

*<sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."*

### Q: What do these illustrations have in common?

- Each of these illustrations is an example of not doing justice... one of the 3 aspects of love we learned about in the last study.
- All of these scenarios are an explanation of what God was getting at when He commanded them not to murder. (**Ex. 20:13**)
  - In Jesus' day, everyone knew that God said murder was wrong; but they didn't really know what was wrong with it, or why God was offended by it.
  - Jesus is teaching that there are other things that are bad besides murder. They may not be as bad as murder, but they are bad for the same reason.
- By using these three examples, Jesus is utilizing "Hebrew parallelism"—saying the same thing, in different, parallel ways, to emphasize importance.

### Q: What is the main point I should get from these illustrations?

- I need to be concerned about the things that offend God (like being unloving), not just whether or not I'm breaking a rule!

### Q: In the 1<sup>st</sup> illustration (**vs. 21-22**), what is the difference between the kind of judgement they had heard of, and the kind of judgement Jesus is warning about?

- Jesus seems to be shifting the meaning of "judgment" from what the Pharisees understood it to mean (judgment from the legal system), to the judgment of God, which results in hell fire.
  - **God will judge not only what you do, but also what you want to do.**

### Q: Is Jesus saying you can never get angry?

- No. Jesus got angry (**Mark 3:5**), and he never sinned (**Heb. 4:15; 2Cor. 5:21**).
- Calling someone "Raca" and/or "fool", is like calling them an idiot.
  - It is not that these are particularly vulgar words; Jesus, James, and Paul all called people fools (**Matt. 23:17; James 2:20; Gal. 3:1**).
- Jesus is using hyperbole to tell us that having angry contempt for your brother is wrong.

### Q: Why is angry contempt for someone so bad?

- People don't always kill out of anger, sometimes it is out of contempt for the value of their life.
  - EXAMPLE: It's like a contract killer who kills for money. He isn't angry, he just values money more than the victim's right to live... that's contempt!
- Whether people murder out of anger or contempt, it's still unjust... Jesus is showing us the heart-level similarity that angry contempt has to murder.

### Q: Is it unjust to be angry with someone for treating me badly?

- If you've ever treated someone else badly, then you have **no right** to expect to never be treated badly by someone else.
  - **Matt. 7:1-2** Jesus teaches that the way I treat others is the way I will be treated. Who are you to object to not being treated perfectly, when *you've* never been able to treat others perfectly?
- Jesus had a right to be angry when He was treated badly, but He chose not to be angry.
  - When they mistreated Him, and nailed Him to the cross, His reaction was to ask God to forgive them (**Luke 23:34**).
  - We are called to follow Jesus, and treat people the way He did!
- So yeah...being angry, with someone who treats you badly, is unjust (i.e., not loving).

### Q: Is anger ever righteous or just?

- The only righteous anger, is when you are angry on behalf of another, who is an innocent victim.
  - When innocent people are violated (whether we know them or like them or not), we should be angered by the injustice they are suffering.
  - Children being treated badly, should always anger us; because they don't deserve to be wronged.
- Jesus' anger is always righteous. When He got angry, it was on behalf of some innocent party... usually God.
  - Jesus was angry when His disciples didn't want to let the children come near Him (**Matt. 19:13-14**).
  - Jesus was angry at God's temple being misused (**Matt. 21:12**), and God's work being criticized (**Mark 3:5**).
- God being insulted, is a righteous cause for anger. God is an innocent party, and insulting Him is unjust.
  - Some people are never angered at an irreverent joke, or a sacrilegious statement, or to hear God's Name used in vain; but they get angry at the slightest little perceived slight to themselves. That kind of anger is self-centered and unjust.

**God is not concerned only with the injustice of murder and anger; there are other injustices He wants us to take seriously. Jesus gives us two more examples:**

**Q: In the 2<sup>nd</sup> illustration (vs. 23-24), why does Jesus want me to be reconciled with someone who has a problem with me, before I try to worship Him?**

- He wants me to care more about resolving injustices, than I do about my religious appearance!
  - We need to go and make things right as quick as we can. If we don't, or won't, our worship is an abomination to God (**Prov. 15:8**).
- Usually, if people are offended at us, it is because of something we have done.... but not always. Jesus is addressing what we should do when others are offended with us... whether they have a right to be offended or not!

**Q: In the 3<sup>rd</sup> illustration (vs. 25-26), why does Jesus say you won't get out of jail until you've paid the last penny?**

- If you've done something wrong to your brother, and you've not made it right, God isn't going to bail you out of the trouble that comes your way.
- God wants you to be more concerned about doing what is right, than winning a court case!
  - If you get thrown in jail for an offense you refuse make right, don't expect God to get you out of jail.

**Read Luke 12:57-59 (NIV)**

*"Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?"<sup>58</sup> As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.<sup>59</sup> I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."*

- Jesus is even clearer in this parallel passage, that God wants us to do the right thing, rather than go to court and hope for a favorable verdict.
- Jesus wants us to value justice enough to do the right thing willingly, rather than having to be forced by a court of law.

## **What About You?**

Q: How concerned with Justice are you?

- Do you look for unjust attitudes and/or actions in your life, and try to make them right?
- Or do you wait for someone to point them out and confront you, before you will do the right thing?
- What does your answer tell you about how loving you really are?

Q: Do you feel entitled to things God says you don't have a right to?

- Do you feel you have a right to be angry with people who don't treat you the way you think you deserve to be treated?
- Do you feel you have a right to continue calling yourself a Christian, when you know someone is angry with you, and you haven't tried to make things right?
- Do you feel you have a right to not pay a debt until you are forced to?

Q: Are you claiming a right to anything, right now, that God would say you don't have a right to? (*This could be an attitude, a relationship, a debt, a material possession, etc.*)