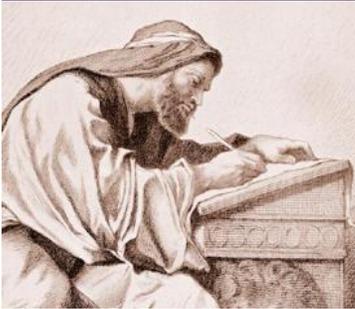


# The Mission Letter

*The Mission Team, PO Box 3323, Leesville, SC 29070*

## Our Item of Need for Today



*“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*

This issue of the Mission Letter contains news regarding the Indian orphans supported by Covenant Baptist Church in Guntur, India. Currently, all 63 orphans, both boys and girls, are doing well.

Their lives are well cared for by the guardians living with them, teaching them, and taking them to church each week. These guardians are a blessing from God.

We have a house for 21 girls who need support, so please pray for their needs to be met. Specifically, pray that donors would provide the \$41.00 for each girl so that we can get them off the street and give them a home.

We have already had the funds donated to ready the home and turn it into an orphanage for them. However, we can't take them off the streets to live in the home until we have the donations to support them.

Again, the \$41.00 will cloth, school, feed, as well as board each of the 21 girls. As the closing article by W. F. Bell discusses, prayer is a means of grace to bring about God's sovereign pleasure. Please pray for this item of need.

We can't do it; we can't get them off the streets without your help for each of these girls.

If you or anyone that you know would like to help us get the orphan girls off the streets in Guntur, India, please send checks of any amount to:

### Prayer Items:

- Parents to invest \$41 to adopt a girl.
- Funds to support the 63 orphans currently in the 3 homes.
- Bible funds.

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Covenant Orphan Fund  
P.O. Box 3323  
Leesville, S.C. 29070

Again, you can help take care of one girl for a month at \$41.00 per month (tax deductible).

Thank you and God bless you for your help.

In Christ,  
Alton Crapps

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## The Law and Murder: Matthew 5:21-27

It should be self-evident that the distinctions which Christ proceeded to draw between what had been said by the ancients on certain points of moral and religious duty, and that which He Himself solemnly affirmed, must have respect not to the *real* and actual teaching of the Law and the Prophets, but rather to the erroneous conclusions which had been drawn therefrom, and of the false notions founded thereon, which were currently entertained at His advent. It were blasphemy to imagine that Christ was so inconsistent as to contradict Himself on this occasion. After so definitely asserting His entire accord with the Law and the Prophets and His own dependence upon them, we cannot believe for a moment that He would immediately afterwards set Himself in opposition to them. This must be settled at the outset if we are to have hearts prepared to weigh what follows.

"The Scribes and Pharisees of that age had completely inverted the order of things. Their carnality and self-righteousness had led them to exalt the precepts respecting ceremonial observances to the highest place, and to throw the duties inculcated in the Ten Commandments comparatively into the background—thus treating the mere appendages of the Covenant as of more account than its very ground and basis" (P. Fairbairn). Therefore it was that when He proceeded to expose the inadequacy and hollowness of "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees," our Lord made His appeal to the testimony engraved on the two tables, and most commonly, though not exclusively, to the precepts of the second table, because He had to do more especially with hypocrites, whose defects might most readily be revealed by a reference to the duties of the *second* table—compare Matthew 19:16; Luke 10:25 and 18:18.

The first commandment brought forward by Christ on this occasion was the sixth of the Decalogue: "You shall not kill." All that the Pharisees understood by this was a prohibition of the act of murder; but our Lord insisted that the commandment in its true import prohibited not only the overt act but every evil working of the heart and mind which led to it—such as unjust anger, with contempt and provoking language. Such an interpretation should not stand in need of any argument. The spiritual mind would rightly reason from such a law: if He who desires truth in the inward parts (Psalm 51) condemns murder, then it is evident we must abstain from all that might lead to that culmination of wickedness; and so it would be discovered that "you shall not kill" really signifies "You shall not hate."

"You have heard that it was said by them of old time, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21). To what, or rather to whom, did our Lord *not* refer to in His, "them of old time?" Certainly not Moses, nor to His Father, as the plural "them" unequivocally shows. Then to whom? In answering this question, let us also show wherein lay the special need for Christ to here expound and enforce the Law. Unfortunately for the Nation, there was ample opportunity for the Scribes and Pharisees to corrupt God's Law, for the rank and file of the people were unable to read the Scriptures in their original tongue. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity, they had largely forgotten their own language, and therefore could not read the Hebrew text.

Obviously, it was the duty of the learned to supply the people with a plain and simple translation of God's Word into the Chaldee or Aramaic. But the proud and selfish Rabbis were concerned not with the glory of God and the good of the people, but with the exaltation of their own order. Therefore, instead of preparing a translation which could be read by the masses at large, they were accustomed, in the synagogues, to read off a loose rendering of the sacred text (alleged to be simpler than the original), intermingled with their own explanatory remarks. It was this ancient paraphrase of the Law, with the comments of the Rabbis, that the Scribes and Pharisees reiterated, and to which our Lord alluded when He here mentioned "them of old time."

God's commandment, "you shall not kill," was capable of expansion into the widest spiritual meaning, prohibiting all hatred against our fellows. But the Scribes and Pharisees restricted it to the bare act of murder as an external crime—as is quite clear from the next verse, where it is referred to as a crime for the consideration of the judicial courts of earth. Thus they were guilty of restricting the scope of God's command, and by connecting it with earthly courts, both suggested to their hearers that only external deeds are sinful, and also removed the very wholesome fear of the Judgment to come, when God shall lay bare not only the actual deeds of men, but even their innermost thoughts, and accuse the murderer in *desire* and intention equally guilty with the actual slayer of his fellow.

Before passing on, let us make three remarks. First, how strangely has history repeated itself! The religious leaders of Israel refused to make a plain translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the speech used by the people upon their exodus from the Babylonian captivity, keeping them in ignorance of the pure Word of God, determining to retain matters in their own hands and exalting their own order. So the Papacy (after the desolating persecution of the early Church by the Roman emperors) refused to make an accurate translation of the Scriptures! They clung, instead, to the corrupt rendition of the Vulgate version, corrupting her dupes by the additions, restrictions, and alterations she made to Divine revelation—her present-day prelates and priests reiterating what was said by their predecessors "in old time"!

Second, how worthless is antiquity as such! As there is a class of people who make a fetish of what is modern and despise anything of the past, so there is a certain type of mind which is strongly attracted by the antique and which venerates traditions. But antiquity is no infallible mark of true doctrine, for this exposition of the Sixth Commandment had obtained among the Jews for centuries past, yet Christ, the great Doctor of the Church, rejected it as *false*, and therefore the argument which the Papists use for the establishing of some of their dogmas and practices drawn from antiquity, is of no effect. Equally worthless are the appeals of Protestants to the Reformers and the Puritans unless they can show that their teachings rested upon a clear, "Thus says the Lord."

Third, how thankful we should be that we have the pure Word of God reliably translated into our mother tongue! To the multitudes of His day Christ said, "You have *heard* that it was said by *them* of old time"-but to *us* He can exclaim, "You may *read* what *God* has said." This is a wondrous and inestimable privilege-purchased by the blood shedding of many of our forefathers-that the Holy Scriptures are no longer confined to the learned and the abbot of the monastery. They are accessible to the unlearned and the poor, everywhere, in simple English. But such a privilege carries with it, my reader, a solemn responsibility. What use are we making of this precious treasure? Do we search it daily, as did the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11)? Are we nourishing our souls thereby? Is our conduct governed by its teaching? If not, double guilt lies at our door.

"But I say unto you, That whoever that is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of Hell fire" (verse 22). This is far from being the easiest verse of Matthew 5 to interpret, and the commentators vary in their explanations of its details; yet its general meaning is plain enough. With His royally authoritative, "I say unto you," the Lord Jesus at once swept aside the rubbish of the rabbis and placed the Law of God before His hearers in all its majesty and holiness, propounding the true interpretation of the Sixth Commandment. No matter what you may have heard the Scribes and Pharisees teach-whether from themselves or from the ancients-it was but the dulling of the sharp edge of God's precept. I, the incarnate Son of God, who seeks only the glory of the Father and the good of souls, declare unto you that there are three degrees of hatred, falling short of the actual deed of murder, which expose a man to the judgment of God as a violator of the Sixth Commandment.

First, "Whoever is angry against his brother without a cause": "brother" would be one Jew against another-for us, against a fellow-Christian-but in its widest scope, against a fellow-man, for by creation all are brethren. It is not anger simply which Christ here reprehends, but unwarrantable and immoderate anger. There is a holy anger as appears from the example of Christ (Mark 3:5) and the apostolic precept, "Be you angry and sin not" (Ephesians 4:26). Should it be asked, How are we to distinguish godly anger from that which is unlawful? The former proceeds from love of righteousness, has in view the *good* of him against whom it is exercised, and looks to the glory of God. Unholy anger issues from pride and desires the *injury* of the one against whom it is directed. Anger is lawful only when it burns against *sin*, and this is equivalent to zeal for the Divine honor.

In His first singling out of unjust anger when expounding the Sixth Commandment, Christ did hereby teach us in *general* that whenever God forbids one sin, He at the same time forbids all sins of the same kind, with all the causes thereof. But He taught in *particular* that specific passion from which most murders proceed. Since, then, unjustified and immoderate anger is a breach of the Decalogue deserving of Divine punishment, how diligently and constantly we should be on our guard, lest this headstrong affection break forth. We must seek grace to restrain and nip it in the bud. Now in order that we may subdue this lust that it prevail not, lay to heart this commandment which forbids rash anger, and frequently call to mind how patiently and mercifully God deals with us every day, and therefore we ought to be like-minded toward our brethren (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

The second branch of the sin here condemned is, "whoever shall say to his brother Raca," or as the margin renders it, "vain fellow." What is here prohibited is that scorn, arising from uncontrolled temper, which leads to speaking contemptuously. All abusive language is forbidden by the Sixth Commandment, all expressions of malignity issuing from a bitter heart, for as Matthew Henry rightly pointed out, "all malicious slanders and censures are adders' poison under their lips" (Psalm 140:3), and kills secretly and slowly. The Spirit of God refers to Ishmael's jeering at Isaac as "persecution" (Galatians 4:29), and the same may be said of all bitter speaking. Yes, the prohibition here extends to the gestures of our body-a sneer, the wagging of our head (Matthew 27:29). Therefore are we required to make conscience of every gesture, every casting of the eye (Genesis 4:6), as well as every passionate word.

The third degree of murder mentioned by Christ is censorious reviling, or calling our brother a "Fool." It is not the simple use of this English word which renders us guilty of this crime as is clear from Luke 24:25; 1 Corinthians 15:36. A benevolent desire to make men sensible of their folly is a good work, but the reviling of them from ungovernable rage is wickedness. With the Jews "fool" ("moren") signified a rebel against God, an apostate, so that the one using this term arrogated to himself the passing of judicial sentence, consigning his fellow to Hell. This was the very word Moses used (in the plural form) in Numbers 20:10, and for which sin he was excluded from Canaan. It is to be observed that never once does the Lord designate His people "rebels," though on several occasions He charges them with being rebellious.

One other thing remains to be mentioned. In the different degrees of penalty mentioned by Christ, He alluded unto the various courts of judgment in vogue among the Jews for punishment-which He applied to the Divine judgment which should fall upon those guilty of the sins He here condemned. And let us say in conclusion, there is no way of escaping the Divine curse upon these sins except by humbling ourselves before God, penitently confessing the murderous passions of our hearts and the manifestation of the same in gesture and speech-begging for His pardon through the atoning blood of Christ.

### The Doctrine of Prayer Defined

*"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Luke 24:27*

"Then came Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, Sit here while I go and pray yonder" (Matthew 26:36). "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us" (1 John 5:14). The teaching of prayer in Scripture needs constantly defining and declaring. There is much misunderstanding on the subject due to fleshly, carnal views of professing Christians, many who have been incorrectly taught by various preachers. Note especially in our texts that Jesus our Lord came to "a place called Gethsemane" to pray, which was outside, not in a temple or cathedral. This tells us the opposite to the way most people think about formal prayer. Then the apostle John tells us that when we "ask anything" of God it must be "according to his will." If that is so, don't we often forget this? We rather desire and demand what we "wish" or "want" in prayer, regardless of God's will. These are fundamental things that cannot be refuted.

Listen now to C. D. Cole further explain right praying for us: "It is sometimes claimed that prayer changes God. We gladly subscribe to the blessed truth that God hears and answers prayer, but we deny emphatically that prayer changes God. This would make man sovereign and supreme rather than God. This would make prayer dictation rather than supplication. Prayer is a means of grace, the results of which are always in harmony with God's will. 'If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.' In prayer we seem to conquer God, but in reality it is he who conquers us. 'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought;' therefore, the Holy Spirit 'makes intercession for us....according to the will of God' (Romans 8:26-27). We must say in prayer, as our Lord in Gethsemane, 'Not my will, but thy will be done' (Matthew 26:39; see Acts 21:14)." ~ C. D. Cole (1885-1968)

So fickle, false, and blind,  
Are these unstable hearts,  
We only are to God resigned,  
As he the grace imparts.

Father, thy will be done,  
In words we oft express;  
When in our hearts we want our own,  
And wish our sufferings less.

William Gadsby  
W.F. Bell

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