

Settle Out of Court
Matthew 5:21-26
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Bible Study
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I. **Passage Context/Historical Background-** Matthew wrote his gospel to a primarily Jewish audience to confirm that Jesus was their Messiah and King and to show what happened to the Kingdom program in light of Israel rejecting Him. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives the beatitudes for a number of reasons:

- A. To show that heart righteousness is superior to hand rituals (religious acts/works)
- B. To clarify the true interpretation of the Law and Christ's relationships to it as the fulfiller and expander of the Law (John 1:17).
- C. To show the application of true righteousness to the public, private, civil, and religious areas of one's life.

II. **Homiletical Outline**

A. **The Problem (21-22)**

- 1. Jesus is addressing His disciples, and the crowds began to follow Him in Galilee after His healing and teaching (4:23—5:2)
- 2. **You have heard** - You shall not commit murder (Ex. 20:13). You'll be guilty before the court.
 - a. The Sons of Israel were given the Law at Mt. Sinai after the Exodus (Ex. 20:13).
 - b. The Pharisees taught that if you commit murder, you are guilty before the church.

3. **But I say** - Jesus here addresses The Pharisees' wrong interpretation of the Law, thus showing His superiority and authority over them.

a. **Anger: First Act (level one)**

1) Anger here is strictly an internal (heart) issue because it has not yet manifested itself.

2) **Guilty**- pertaining to being required to give an account for something held against one, liable, answerable

3) The Sanhedrin was the Jewish court, and its 70-member body were the judges.

4) The Pharisees only believe you to be guilty when murder was committed, but Jesus says you are guilty when you are angry.

b. **“You Good for Nothing”**: Second Act (level two)

1) The anger has grown and is manifesting itself and harming others.

2) This guiltiness goes beyond their court to an even higher authority.

c. **“You Fool”**: Third Act (level three)

1) The anger has gotten out of control, thus giving the person a superior complex over the individual.

2) The act is guilty before God because the person has made themselves out to be equal to God (Psalm 14:1).

3) The word for hell is Gehenna, which means valley of Hinnom. This alley is south of Jerusalem, where a continually burning fire consumed the city trash, which became a term that illustrated eternal punishment for the wicked.

4) **Commentary-** The Lord said the commandment extended not only to the act itself but also to the internal attitude behind the act. Of course, murder is wrong, but the anger prompting the act is as wrong as plunging a knife.

4. Jesus never gets to murder, thus showing that a person can already be guilty to the highest level of authority before the act of murder is ever committed.

5. **The problem- The true problem here is unconfessed/unchecked anger, which continues to grow to the point of murder.**

B. **The Solution (23-26)**

1. **The “Innocent” Person’s Responsibility (23-24)**

a. Reconciliation took priority over offering.

1) **Reconciled-** to be restored to normal relations or harmony with someone.

2) Believers should be unified in the Spirit with one another (Romans 12:17)

3) If reconciliation hasn’t taken place, your offering is unacceptable.

2. **The “Guilty” Person’s Responsibility (25-26)**

a. Reconcile on the way to court with your opponent at law.

1) **Law-** one who brings a charge in a lawsuit, accuser, plaintiff.

a) The 613 laws of Israel were given to the people so that they can love God and their neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40).

b) If an accusation was brought, it had to be based on a violation of the Law of Israel.

b. If reconciliation was not accomplished, then your opponent could:

1) Hand you over to the judge, who handed you over to the officer, who threw you in jail.

2) You don't get out of jail until you've paid it all (the opportunity to reconcile is lost).

III. Biblical Principle and Application from the Passage

A. Principles:

1. A righteous heart is better than religious acts.
2. Unconfessed sin multiplies and becomes worse.
3. Reconciliation takes priority over different acts of worship.

B. Application:

1. If you know you have something against someone or if someone has something against you, seek to make it right this week.
2. If you have allowed your anger to go unchecked, repent and ask God for forgiveness this week. Search His Word and seek accountability for making it right with the person you have been angry with.