

**A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS**  
**XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness**  
**D. Christ's Righteousness Regarding The Issue Of Murder**  
**(Matthew 5:21-26 et al.)**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Christ's great Sermon on the Mount provided valuable insight on God's true righteousness, what Israel's religious leaders greatly lacked as seen in their dead traditionalism.
- B. To illustrate the contrast between the false righteousness of Israel's leaders and God's true righteousness, Jesus gave six illustrations, with the first illustration regarding the issue of murder in Matthew 5:21-26.
- C. We study this passage in view of other Scriptures for insight, application and edification (as follows):

**II. Christ's Righteousness Regarding The Issue Of Murder, Matthew 5:21-26 et al.**

- A. The Mosaic Law commanded, "'Do not murder' (Matt. 5:21)," and Jesus noted that His Hebrew listeners had heard from their religious leaders that it was commanded from long ago, and he who murdered would be subject to the judgment of capital punishment, Matthew 5:21, Exodus 20:13 NIV, Genesis 9:6. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 178)
- B. However, "the Pharisees interpreted the law to mean that as long as one did not take another man's life, the person was innocent of breaking the law; consequently, the person was acceptable to God," Ibid.
- C. Conversely, "Jesus knew that anger, hatred, and malice are roots with the capacity to produce the terrible fruit of murder," so "He showed that if the root was present, a person has violated the law even though the root has not yet produced its fruit," Ibid. Consequently, before God, "(a)ny violation would be punished," Ibid.:
  - 1. Jesus said that he who was angry with his brother would be in danger of the judgment, v. 22a. "Although the (manuscript) reading" that adds "*eike* ["without cause"] is widespread from the second century onwards, it is much more likely that the word was added by copyists in order to soften the rigor of the precept than omitted as unnecessary." (Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p. 13) However, anger itself is not sin since Ephesians 4:26 orders us to be angry but not to sin in allowing that anger to fester and enhance over time. Thus, we believe that Jesus was not condemning anger at a wrong a brother does, but that anger that one allows to fester and grow over time, leading to hatred!
  - 2. If one lets his anger fester over time so that he makes a derogatory remark to his brother like "Raca," what "(p)robably means 'empty head'" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Matt. 5:22), he would be in danger of the *sunedrio*, the Greek term for the Sanhedrin! (Matt. 5:22b; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 14)
  - 3. However, if one lets his anger fester beyond the point of calling his brother "Raca" to where he actually says, "Thou fool," what constituted a more insulting term than "Raca" and likely meant "blockhead, fool" (Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. IV, p. 840-841), that one was in danger of the fire of hell, Matthew 5:22c.
- D. Accordingly, if a relationship problem has arisen with a brother, a believer is obligated by the Lord to seek to reconcile with his brother to avoid serious punishment, Matthew 5:23-26 (as follows):
  - 1. If a Hebrew approached the temple altar in Jesus' day to offer a gift to God, but there he remembered that his brother or sister had something against him, not even that he had anything against his brother or sister, that Hebrew needed to leave his gift at the altar and first seek to be reconciled with the offended brother or sister before returning to offer his gift to God, Matthew 5:23-24.
  - 2. [In cases where a brother is not open to reconciliation (cf. 2 Timothy 3:3b *aspandos* = "irreconcilable," Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 735; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 116), the believer in Christ today needs to obey 2 Timothy 3:5 and withdraw close contacts with such a person!]
  - 3. One needs to try to settle matters quickly with an adversary who is taking him to court lest his adversary turns him over to the judge and the judge hands him over to the officer who throws him into prison, Matthew 5:25. If one then ends up in prison, he will have to pay the entire fine, Matthew 5:26.

***Lesson:*** *Though the Pharisees and Jesus held that taking a human life in murder is sin, the Pharisees did not treat festering anger, hatred, and malice that are the roots that lead to the act of murder as violating the prohibition of murder where Christ included these vices as violations of God's prohibition against murder. So, to attain God's standard of not committing murder, one must watch that his attitude stays upright long before he commits murder.*

***Application:*** *May we believers in Christ rely on the Spirit of God to watch that our attitude toward other people never allows even just anger to fester, but that we seek peace and reconciliation wherever possible for God's glory.*