

Sermon on the Mount: Dealing with Spirit of Anger (Matt 5:20-26)



1. Six Signs of Moral Degeneration in the Society

If I ask you to come up with different facets of moral decay in our society many of us would list the following:

- i. growing anger & violence (5:21-26)
- ii. sexual degradation & permissiveness (5:27-30)
- iii. broken marriages & broken families (5:31-32)
- iv. loss of integrity in people's words (5:33-37)
- v. escalation of personal retaliation without mercy (5:38-42)
- vi. widespread lack of love (5:43-48).

Modern society parallels the evil generation the LORD destroyed by the flood. (C.f. Gen 6:1-11)

- a. Jesus deals with these six marks of moral degeneration in the rest of the chapter. From here on Jesus says six times, *'You have heard that it was said.'* The two keywords are *'heard'* and *'said'*. Jesus is referring to the *erroneous oral tradition of the Scribes and the Pharisees* here, not to the teaching of the Old Testament itself. When Jesus quoted the Bible, He often said, *'Have you never read?'* Or *'It is written.'* Here, Jesus is referring to what people 'heard' and 'said', i.e. *'the fallacies of the handed-down Bible teaching'* which misrepresents what God actually said with what people say, and twists what is clearly written. Jesus never corrected or contradict the Old Testament Scriptures, but He clarified the true intention of the Scriptures and fulfilled it.
- b. How did men twist the Scriptures? Two main ways:
 - i. take away or reduce the full weight of what God said.
 - ii. add to it what is not in there but what we want to see ('eis-geis' = 'read into the text'). E.g. Serpent's temptation and Eve's mistake in the garden was 'adding to the word of God.' (Gen 3:3)Jesus deals with both problems.

2. The Spirit of Murder is Rooted in the Spirit of Anger.

- a. Sixth Commandment: *'You shall not murder,'* (Ex 20:13) is translated, *'Thou shalt not kill - (ἀποκτείνω) KJV'*, leading to misunderstanding. But the word here is *'murder - (φονεύω)'* - premeditated killing of human life fuelled by anger - not just any killing. It is not promoting vegetarianism or opposing capital punishment or discouraging self-defense or defending our family against threat or harm.
 - b. The error of the Pharisees was that their definition of murder was too narrow. God hates and is against all forms of murder - whether in thought, word, or deed. This was the original intention of the sixth commandment – 'you shall not murder', but men's interpretation limited its application to the physical act of murder and the threat of prosecution in the courts (if caught). They missed the real point. The danger is much deeper. Murder is rooted in unbridled anger. Murder and unbridled anger have the same spiritual roots. Remember Cain and Abel? The unchecked anger eventually will grow into actual murder! (Gen 4:8).
 - c. *'...hates a brother without a cause'*, i.e. there is an unchecked spirit of hate and anger inside of you. Jesus speaks of danger four times, i.e. accident waiting to happen. You need to take heed immediately when you have repetitive anger and hate against someone. It is the spirit of murder in its early stages in seed form, working in your heart, which will eventually wreak havoc in every area of your life.
- C.f. 1 John 3:5, *'...whoever hates his brother is a murderer...'*
- d. Why do we experience anger? Have you met someone who is always angry? Behind their anger is a frustrated goal, which is blamed on someone or something. When our goal - stated or unstated - e.g. to be admired, to be rich, to be in control, etc. - is blocked, we experience anger. The goal may not be sinful in itself, but when we set a soulish goal (not Spirit-led) and we are unable to reach it on our terms, we experience anger. Underneath that anger is unresolved blame directed toward someone or something.

'Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for (soulish) pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain.

You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask (to the Father in prayer). You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.’ (James 4:1-2).

We are to turn our anger and frustration into prayer to our heavenly Father and resolve them either by receiving an answer from God, or we must realign our soulish goal into spirit-led goals.

‘The measure of unbridled anger is the measure of unperceived pride.’ (Mike Bickle)

3. Speaking out of the spirit of anger fuels that spirit to the next level.

- a. Habitual accusations and verbal attacks make us sick on the inside. Venting out negative emotions habitually by cutting words does not alleviate or resolve anger. It only feeds anger to the next level.

‘Raca’ (ῥακά) is not translated because it is a spitting sound (onomatopoeia) of Chaldean origin, picked up by the Jews probably during the Babylonian exile. It means *empty head, numbskull*. It is akin to the ‘s’ word or ‘f’ words sprayed around in our own swearing culture when people vent their anger and frustration. There is a direct connection between our words and our negative emotion. It gives Satan the legal right to escalate the spirit of anger to the next level. This is exactly what Satan wants: to move you *from sinful weakness to strongholds of wickedness*.

‘Fool’ (ῤωρός – Eng ‘moron’) is a nasty statement of somebody’s character, very offensive in the Hebraic culture - *‘~hopeless stupid fool?’* It is passing an ultimate judgment on someone’s character, which we are forbidden to do. That seat of judgment belongs to God. To call someone ‘moron’ (ῤωρός) is to put them beyond redemption. Jesus used this word once for the rich fool whose soul would be required of him that night. (Luke 12:20)

- b. Four Levels of Progression of the Spirit of anger:

- i. in your soul
- ii. in your relationships
- iii. in a law court
- iv. before God’s judgment (hellfire)

It does not mean whenever we say something bad, we will lose salvation. But it does mean our hearts can be so hardened to the point that God’s word does not touch us anymore. How many people in prison can trace their downfall to a moment of unbridled anger? But it did not happen in a moment. That seething spirit of anger grew inside over many years.

- c. *‘...looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled?’ (Heb 12:15).*

- i. Why do we need to look diligently? Because it is difficult to detect it within us. We are self-deceived.
- ii. Causes us to short-circuit God’s grace in our lives.
- iii. The deep root system underneath spreads out like cancer and causes trouble in every area of our life. It is the #1 cause of marriage destroyer. E.g. Angry spirit manifesting in sarcastic and condescending words.
- iv. Defiling many. E.g. children growing up in such a negative environment become defiled in spirit and have trouble relating to authority.

There is only one way to deal with it - repentance.

4. We Deal with the Spirit of ANGER Immediately with the Spirit of HUMILITY

- a. ‘Therefore’ if you have spoken evil words out of the spirit of anger and someone in your life is injured because of them, you need to humble yourself by going to the person and apologise. If you are falsely accused and hated without a just cause, you rejoice in the Lord. (Matt 5:12). But if you are rightly criticised, to the degree it is true we need to humble ourselves and acknowledge it.
- b. ‘gift’ is an expression of our love for God, i.e. worship. Our words to God in worship and our words about people (both publicly and privately) matter to God. They are directly linked. If you have a strained relationship with a brother, don’t take your offering off the altar. Leave it there, and offer it to the Lord

after the relationship is put right. So this is not banishment from worship. But exercising humility in our relationships will open the door of true worship.

Practical tip: 'Sorry, *IF I* offended you...' VS 'Sorry, *THAT I* offended you...'

5. Warning: The Cost of NOT Dealing with the Spirit of Anger in Our Hearts

The cost is too high. No one can afford to pay the price.

- a. Commonly known story of that day: bankruptcy and prison sentence (Matt 18:21-35). None of us can afford to pay the price of harbouring a spirit of anger in our life. We will be in perpetual bondage from within. When you come across your 'adversary', i.e. 'the spirit of anger' (someone who points it out), you must acknowledge it immediately and deal with it. Don't let it grow into a stronghold and wreak havoc in every area of your life!
- b. *'So God said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well sin lies (crouches) at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.' (Gen 4:6-7)*
- c. Questions for Reflection
 1. Do you have an unchecked spirit of anger lurking in your heart? How do you know you have it?
 2. How does the spirit of anger grow in stages like cancer? How are our emotions and speech linked to anger?
 3. What is the cost of harbouring anger? What are the keys to dealing with it in our hearts?