

Words from the Fire #6

8.8.21

Exodus Series

Exodus 20:13 (CSB)

¹³Do not murder.

Genesis 9:6 (CSB)

⁶Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans his blood will be shed,
for God made humans in his image.

Matthew 5:21–24 (CSB)

²¹“You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder,** and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. ²²But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.’ ²³So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

Introduction: This Commandment may seem easier than the others.

A. But I feel that this Word is much more complicated than we realize.

1. In this room, there are people who carry the burden of being placed into life and death situations.
2. With us today are those who have served in the military and law-enforcement, where life and death is more than theory.
3. In this room are people who carry some guilt regarding a friend or family member who completed suicide.

4. Then there are those that have had to make the decision whether to continue life-support on a family member, or to let them go.

B. **We live in a society where death is both common and unfamiliar.**

1. Most people in our culture will never have to kill their own food, to know what it is like to process an animal, and to have blood on their hands.

a. If we would reflect, we will realize that this has not been the case for most of human history.

b. Wealth and technology has made it possible for many people to be unfamiliar with death at a personal level.

2. Yet, this same society is enamored with death.

a. Our media reflects our growing blood lust.

b. Not too many years ago, death on the silver screen did not involve any blood.

c. Today, that is certainly not the case.

d. It seems that we desire more and more violence.

1. This is nothing new.

2. Our ancestors were certainly violent and cruel as well.

3. The Roman coliseum was built to give the spectators the blood they desired, without requiring the populace to get their hands dirty.

C. It isn't my desire, or God's desire, for us to go back to the way things were.

1. I make these contrasts to our recent past to demonstrate how pervasive sin is.

2. **Sin leads us in a downward direction, not upward.**

3. If we all decided to become Amish, and forsake modern-conveniences, we would still have a sin problem.

a. We would still struggle against the pull of violence.

b. We would still struggle against the urges of sin.

4. It is not God's desire for us to go backward, but to go forward.

a. And the way forward does not involve more murder, more hate, or more anger.

b. To move forward, we must understand what God is saying, and not saying in this commandment, and how this applies to the human condition.

1. Murder dishonors and destroys the image of God in humanity.

A. Like it or not, God created all of us in His image.

1. This is why we are pro-life.

2. This is why we are against euthanasia.

3. When we maliciously, wantonly take the life of another person, we are dishonoring God's plans, God's design, and God's instruction.

B. A culture that fails to honor each other will not hesitate to kill each other.

1. Have you ever read history and wondered, "How did that happen?"

2. How did the events of the past 50-75 years take place:

a. The Holocaust.

b. The Killing Fields of Cambodia.

c. Rwanda.

d. The ethnic-genocide of Bosnia.

3. How can humanity be so cruel?

- a. Long before the gas chamber or a rifle bullet, it started in the heart.
- b. In a few minutes, we will look at Jesus' teaching about the heart.

C. Exodus teaches us that God wanted Israel to be different than her neighbors.

1. God wanted Israel to be a nation that respected life, because Life is a gift from God.

2. In Egypt, life could have been attributed to any one of many gods.

- a. The Nile brought life, the Sun, and the fertility goddesses.

- b. But God declared that He was the creator of life.

- c. And it was God's prerogative to give life, and to take it away.

3. Commandment 6 is God drawing a line, and declaring "Do not Pass".

- a. God is marking the boundaries of His territory, declaring that the power of Life and Death belong to Him.

- b. Thou shalt not murder.

2. Thou shalt not kill, or thou shalt not murder?

A. The KJV said, "Thou shalt not kill."

1. But the original language is much clearer and specific.

2. "The Hebrew language has at least eight different words for killing, and the one used here has been chosen carefully. The word *ratzach* is never used in the legal system or in the military. There are other Hebrew words for the execution of a death sentence or for the kind of killing that a soldier does in mortal combat. Nor is the word *ratzach* ever used for hunting and killing animals. So the King James Version, which says, "Thou shalt not

kill" (Exod. 20:13), is somewhat imprecise. What the commandment forbids is not killing, but the *unlawful* killing of a human being."¹

B. If the commandment is against, *unlawful* killing, is there such thing as lawful killing?

1. Biblically, The answer is Yes.
2. The Old Testament never justifies murder, but does include instances and laws for justice, execution, and warfare.
3. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 13, declares the rightness of the government carrying the sword to execute justice as necessary.
4. Even God Himself commanded the armies of Israel to kill His enemies.
5. David was both a warrior and a man after God's own heart.
6. Jesus is depicted in Revelation as the One who executes the final judgment against God's enemies.

C. Is killing a person ever good?

1. No.
2. But it can be justifiable.
3. Is the killing of a person always a sin, NO.
4. **The taking of human lives is unfortunately part of the human experience under sin.**
 - a. Because the sin of Adam and Eve brought humanity under a curse, death became part of the human experience.
 - b. Because people do sinful things, sometimes the right thing to do is to go to war and execute justice.

¹ Philip Graham Ryken and R. Kent Hughes, [*Exodus: Saved for God's Glory*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 616.

c. Is killing ever good? NO but sometimes it is necessary.

3. How can I be a person of love and still own and carry a gun?

A. How is it that I have no problem putting a gun on my belt while on patrolling as a chaplain.

1. How can I carry a Bible AND a Gun?

2. For myself, that gun isn't a device of hatred or violence.

a. It is a device of protection.

b. I own and carry guns to protect those who may not be able to protect themselves.

c. I own and carry a gun because I value human life, and I am willing to protect those lives from those who DO NOT value the image of God in other people.

B. Should everyone own guns?

1. Absolutely not. Let's be clear about that.

2. For some, weapons help facilitate their hatred.

3. Some people act irresponsibly and should not have a gun.

INSERT Picture in San Francisco.

C. My point is this:

1. We all must work out our own understanding of Scripture regarding self-defense, military service, and even capital punishment.

2. Good, Godly people hold views involving the full-spectrum of understanding here.

3. We do see biblical teaching that justifies the taking of human life under certain situations.

4. God and believers are not in violation of the 6th Commandment in these situations.

But don't think we are all off the hook.

4. Jesus expands upon this commandment in Matthew 5.

A. He first confirms the validity “thou shalt not murder”.

1. But then Jesus takes this commandment beyond the realm of actions and to the realm of heart.

2. Sin originates in our heart-life.

a. Before we commit a sinful action, we commit a sinful thought.

b. Even if we do not follow through with it, that thought is already sin.

c. Next week, we will discuss this fallacy within the realm of adultery.

Matthew 5:21–24 (CSB)

MURDER BEGINS IN THE HEART

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, **Do not murder,** and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. ²² But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister, will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire.’ ²³ So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

B. Why is Jesus hard on anger in Matthew 5?

1. Being angry with someone, calling them a fool, and holding a grudge doesn’t sound anything close to murder.

2. Besides, Many of us know that Jesus was angry several times, including cleansing the Temple with whips twice.

3. So, what’s the difference?

C. Jesus knew when to flip tables, and He knew when to turn the other cheek. We usually don’t.

1. The same Jesus who flipped tables in anger is the same Jesus who took the beatings from the Roman soldiers and Sanhedrin without uttering a word.
2. Jesus was able to act and suffer without allowing hate to enter into His heart.
3. I think this SONG describes most of our responses.

VIDEO: TRY JESUS, NOT ME.

D. Jesus knew how to be angry, and to not sin in that anger.

1. Usually, my anger goes too far.
2. For most of us, there is a very fine line between anger and hatred.
3. When we move into the realm of hatred, we move into the realm of sin.

Application: What do we do?

1. To those who may have taken a life in combat or in the line of duty, you are not in violation of the 6th commandment.
 - a. Maybe this is something you have wrestled with.
 - b. I hope today you have received the clarity from Scripture that you have needed.
 - a. There is a difference between murder and combat.
 - b. There is a difference between defending self, family, community, and country and murder.
 - c. Please know that we have veterans you can talk to in this congregation, including Pastor Harvey.
2. Maybe you find yourself struggling with hate.
 - a. It's not enough for us to soften or justify our hate.
 - b. Jesus' command is not for you to be less hateful but for you to be hate-less.

c. According to Jesus' teaching, if you are harboring hate you are in violation of #6.

d. Hate always gets in the way of love.

3. We cannot walk in love and in hate at the same time.

a. Be careful with the phrase: Love the sinner, hate the sin.

b. Too often, we blur the lines between the person and the sin.

c. Perhaps we should strive to bring both the sinner and the sin to the foot of the Cross, so that the precious blood of Jesus might sweep over both sinner and sin.

d. For it is Jesus who forgives us of our past, and gives us a new heart.

Prayer:

1. Lord, Give us a Clean Heart.

2. God will you replace our hate with love.

3. May we not walk in anger but in all the Fruit of the Spirit.