Chapter Six

Getting Away With Murder

"You shall not kill." ~Exodus 20:13

INTRODUCTION

In all my years of preaching, I have never encountered as difficult a subject as that posed by the Sixth Commandment. “Thou shalt not kill” (KJV) “You shall not murder” (NASB). The reason for this difficulty is that there are more sub-topics than I realized. If we were to attempt to cover how this Commandment impacts all of our modern areas of death, we would need to consider its relevance to the following:

· Premeditated Murder
· Passionate Murder
· Manslaughter
· Involuntary Manslaughter
· Euthanasia: Mercy killing
· Suicide
· Assisted suicide
· Abortion
· Animal rights
· War, etc. etc..

Along with the need to define this Commandment in all of those categories are the Scriptures that deal with the sanctity of life. What is life? One author of a booklet on the Ten Commandments stated that life does not begin until actual physical “birth”. His reasoning was based on the Scripture from Genesis that speaks of God breathing the breath of life into that object of clay. He concluded that breath equaled life. What *is* life? Specifically – human life?

> Merriam Webster: 1 a: the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body b: a principle or force that is considered to underlie the distinctive quality of animate beings; c: an organismic state characterized by capacity for metabolism, growth, reaction to stimuli, and reproduction. 5 a: the period from birth to death b: a specific phase of earthly existence

If we take the latter part of this definition of *life*, then that author is correct. The prophet Jeremiah records God as saying:

> **Jeremiah 1:4-5** The word of the LORD came to me, saying, [5] 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.'

The Biblical concept of life is in the mind of God. It transcends the mere physical existence of

the body.

> **John 1:4** In him was life, and that life was the light of men.
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> **John 5:40** Yet you refuse to come to me to have life.
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> **John 10:10** The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.
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> **Matthew 10:28** Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Life, then, begins in the mind of God, finds fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, and ends in judgment and eternity. Life begins and ends with God,

> **Revelation 21:6** He said to me: 'It is done. *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.* To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.' ~Emphasis added.
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> **John 7:37-39** On the last and greatest day of the Feast[1], Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.
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> **John 12:16** At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.
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> **John 13:31-32** When he was gone, Jesus said, '*Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him*. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.' ~Emphasis added.

We *cannot*, we *will not* know the fullness of life until we know the fullness of the Spirit. We will *never* know the fullness of the Spirit until Jesus is glorified in all areas of our lives. Paul said: "For me to live *is* ***Christ****....*" The antithesis of life is *Death*. From all practical considerations, Adam and Eve were equipped to live forever. They were given the ability to eat from the Tree of Life; but, sin came, and the rest is unfortunate history.

> **Romans 5:12, 17** Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.... **17** For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the

[1] The *Feast* spoken here is the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths

gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

God told the Children of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land, "This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).
We have seen, through our study of the Ten Commandments, that one of the things that is accomplished in us because of our relationship with God through Jesus, is that the Righteousness of the Law is manifested. That righteousness is manifested because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

If we say that we are Christians, and our lives do not reflect the morality of the Ten Commandments, we have a serious problem, bigger than we think. On Thursday, March 6th, 1998, The Arizona Republic carried the following Associated Press news item:

> The House on Wednesday threw its support behind an Alabama judge who has refused to remove a Ten Commandments plaque from his courtroom and has asked for military protection against those trying to take it down. The non-binding resolution, adopted 295-125, said the Ten Commandments should be permitted in government offices and courthouses because they are a declaration of fundamental principles that are cornerstones of a fair and just society. The measure was introduced ... on behalf of Judge Roy S. Moore. Moore is involved in a two-year dispute over his display of a wood carving of the Ten Commandments in his courtroom and his practice of opening court sessions with prayer. The American Civil Liberties Union argued in the lawsuit that Moore's courtroom religious practices violate the Constitution's separation of church and state. A Circuit Court judge agreed last year, ordering Moore to halt the prayers and remove the plaque. The Alabama Supreme Court has stayed that ruling while it decides Moore's appeal. [Congressman] Aderholt, in debate Tuesday, said: 'To exclude a display of the Ten Commandments because it suggests an establishment of religion is not consistent with our nation's heritage, let alone common sense.' But opponents said Congress has no right to intervene and suggested that the House should be dealing with more substantive issues.

What is more substantive than the foundational principles of Law? The reason for *this* Study is so that we, as God's people, can return to the Law in our personal lives; and return the Law to its proper place in our homes and in society. Our purpose is *not* to make the Law the basis of our righteousness, but to come to a better understanding of its place in our lives. The first Three Commandments deal with our relationship with God. The Fourth Commandment deals with us: our need for physical rest and Spiritual Worship. The Fifth Commandment deals with the principle of authority, beginning with our parents. These last five Commandments are geared towards our relationships in society. All these Commandments *should* have been learned in societies' training ground—the home; then reinforced in our schools and churches. We know the reasons that this has not happened in the present generation. The underlying problem is not the school system; nor is it the church's problem, but a deterioration in our homes! Granted, our educational system and our churches have deteriorated, but only in proportion to our homes. "As the home goes, so goes the nation...."

This Sixth Commandment states: "*You shall not kill.*" The word *kill* could be better translated

murder. Have you ever murdered someone? Most of us would answer emphatically "**NO!"** Sometimes, in defense of someone accused of murder the attorney will state that their client is incapable of murder. Are we capable of murder? Again, most of us would answer with an emphatic "**NO!**" Clarence Darrow, a famous criminal lawyer, once said, "Everyone is a potential murderer. I have not killed anyone, but I frequently get satisfaction out of obituary notices."
Every 22 seconds someone in the USA is beaten, stabbed, shot, robbed, raped or killed. Nearly two million individuals a year become violent-crime victims.

> Nine-year-old James Darby wrote the following letter to President Clinton on April 29, 1994: 'Dear Mr. Clinton, I want you to stop the killing in the city. People is dead and I think that somebody might kill me. So would you please stop the people from deading. I'm asking you nicely to stop it. I know you can do it. Do it. I now you could. Your Friend, James.' Before he could get an answer to his letter, James Darby was gunned down in New Orleans in a drive-by shooting.[2]

I hope to prove that we are not only *capable* but *guilty* of breaking this Sixth Commandment.

I. THE OBVIOUS IMPLICATIONS

In dealing with the *obvious implications* of this Law, I was faced with different dispositions in our society that are equated *murder.* · pre-meditated murder · manslaughter · capital punishment · involuntary manslaughter · mass murder · war · suicide · assisted suicide · abortion · euthanasia (mercy killing), the list could go on.

Included in this morass is the question of what is legal, especially today in light of the media coverage of assisted suicides. There are even those individuals that consider the killing of animals as murder. The Commandment is very simple: *You shall not murder.* Yet our society has managed to make this law into one of the greatest quagmires of our day. We punish, with varying degrees of intensity, those who kill an animal on the endangered species list; while allowing, as legal, the killing of a baby in the third trimester of pregnancy. We deliver stiffer penalties for crimes against animals than we do the physical and emotional abuse of children.

Our English word *murder* came into use sometime before the 12th Century; and has its roots in Middle English, Old English, French, German, & Latin. It is defined by the Miriam Webster Dictionary as: "The crime of unlawfully killing a person especially with malice aforethought."—meaning, pre-meditated murder. The key here is in society's determining what is *legal*. Our tendency is to buy into society's definition all too often at the expense of God's definition. Our job is to understand God's meaning; and then incorporate that meaning into our lives, and, by so doing, seek to make it a part of society. At its very basic level, this Commandment means that we are not to cut short someone's life.

> **James 4:1-2** "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? [2] You want something but don't get it. *You kill* and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. ~Emphasis added.

[2] *USA Today,* 7-14-94, p3A.

James is not speaking of the world at large but is speaking specifically to and about Christians. In one sense, we are prone to breathe a sigh of relief because we have not actually murdered someone; but that is a false sense of security. While James acknowledges that murder arises out of our fleshly desires, he is not looking at murder from a purely human standpoint.

First, James is approaching murder as breaking the law. God's Law: The Ten Commandments!

> **James 2:10-12** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. [11] For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. [12] Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom.

God views His law as a single entity. We view His law as ten separate laws. So, from God's perspective, even if we have never physically killed someone, but have broken another of His Commandments, we are guilty of breaking the Law. Would we be correct in assuming that James is using God's definition of murder? You say, "That's James." Martin Luther didn't like James. In fact, he advocated tearing the book of James out of the Bible. Well, if James presents you with problems, will you accept what John has to say? "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 John 3:15).
Quite simply, if we are involved in hatred, the principle of life is dormant, and the flesh is active. The word *hate* means: to detest (especially by persecution). It also is used as a means of comparison; and thus, can mean to love less. Love less? Less than what? To love less than is required; to love less than Jesus loves!

> **John 13:34** A new command I give you: Love one another. *As I have loved you*, so you must love one another. ~Emphasis added.

"*As I have loved you*" means that we are to love each other in the same manner that Jesus loves us—without reservation or preferential treatment. Since the book of James is in my Bible, I want to use it regardless of how Martin Luther felt about it. James says, "My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism."

Most often, this sin of preferential treatment is rooted in our regard for a person's economic status. Yet, it is not necessarily confined to economics. That just happens to be the most prolific basis for our bias!

> **Leviticus 19:15** "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. ~Emphasis added.

It is hard for us to equate all of this with *murder*; yet, according to God, that is exactly what it is. It appears that we are more guilty than we thought. What did Jesus say about all of this? The New Testament books called "Epistles" are expansions on His words.

II. THE OBSCURE IMPLICATIONS

The *Spiritual* is the motivation for the *Physical*. I would like us to consider a passage from the

Gospel of Matthew to help us understand the far-reaching effects of this Law. I have included the passage here.

> **Matthew 5:21-26** You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' [22] But I tell you that anyone who is angry (without cause) with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. [23] "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. [25] "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. [26] I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

I. Three Degrees of Murder

There are three phases of error dealt with here in this scripture passage. Because emphasis amongst Jews was on *judgment*—negative motivation, not much effort was put into positive restraint. First, there is error from our heart. Second, there is error with our words. Third, there is error in our judgment. In our modern court system, felonies are classified by degree. Some states use a letter system while others use a number to designate the severity of the crime. Murder one is almost always intentional, premeditated murder. I have taken the above thought-provoking scripture and divided it into three degrees of murder with corresponding degrees of punishment.

Murder Three:

Murder three in the above passage is the error when our words attack another individual's personal character. This degree of murder is, in effect, an error within our *heart*. In the phrase "angry without cause:" the word *angry* means to provoke. The first root means "excitement of the mind, indignation." The second, or primitive root, means "to stretch oneself; to covet after."
The word *cause* means "idly, or without reason." Its root means to be weak. ie. weak in argument, for example, "So-n-so makes me mad" "Why?" "I don't know, they just do!" Another example: A child spills milk at the dinner table, and the parent is angry without cause. The child is not breaking any rule; it was an accident. An example of "just cause" would be if the child has deliberately broken a rule about not reaching across their plate for something, but they do so and end up spilling their milk. A third example of the difference between "just cause" and "without cause" for anger would be if I asked to borrow your car and have an accident. In the case of "without cause", you would be angry with me for having an accident, when that is just what it was, an accident. If, on the other hand, I had stolen your car and wrecked it, you would have "just cause" to be angry with me. The implication here is that we must have *reasons* for feelings and where there are no reasons the other party is powerless to correct the problem.

Murder Two:

The second error in attacking another individual's character is an error that deals with our *words*. The literal translation of "raca" means "stupid" or "without sense". We might use the term "brainless" or "blockhead". We have become very adept at coming up with "put-downs". Several years ago, there was a popular book on the market that gave snappy "comebacks" to assist in putting someone down. Any of the following fall into the category of calling someone "raca": "Where's your brain?"; "You don't have a brain in your head"; "Dumb as a rock"; "Brain dead"; "Senseless". I am sure there are many, many more. Why is this so wrong when it is so obviously in vogue? The reason is it's detrimental, especially to children!

One day when my children were approximately five and six, I called one of them *stupid*. God hit me "upside" the head and brought to my remembrance my own experiences, not only as a child, but also as an adult! Consequently, I decided to judge the action not the person—big difference! We all do *stupid* things or make *dumb* decisions but that does not mean we *are* either dumb or stupid. Remember the childhood chant: "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names can never hurt me?" We wish! These words *wound,* and the wound goes to the very core of an individual.

A few years ago one of my co-workers started calling me "dummy". I was already struggling with low self-esteem, and I found myself responding to his words "Hey dummy" with "What?" I would respond, because I thought he was right. He equated my deafness with my intelligence, and I began to do the same. Then, a few years ago, I was in college and began acquiring "A's" in all of my courses and was surprised. I was surprised at my own ability because I had bought into someone else's viewpoint about myself. What they did was wrong because often words strip individuals of self-worth. Consequently, they lose their ability to love themselves; and, as a result, they are incapable of truly loving others. Our words are like seeds – they will germinate and produce. What is produced is dependent on the words used.

Murder One:

The third area of error centers around God's character and deals with our *judgment*. Verse 22 says, "But whosoever shall say, 'You fool,' will be in danger of the fires of hell." The phrase, "you fool" means "without grace". This individual is making an arbitrary judgment about the other person's spiritual condition. That judgment is claiming that there is no grace for the person being condemned. Psalm 14 has some sobering words on this subject, "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. [2] The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God" (Psalm 14:1-2).

I have seen individuals, in an attempt to convey the seriousness of certain situations, call into question another person's salvation; or even the hopelessness of a person's relationship with God. That is the work of the Holy Spirit! We may not be guilty of using the actual word "*fool"*. At the very least, our English word, "fool", does not mean what Jesus is saying here.

> "Fool": 1. A person lacking in judgment or prudence; 2. A harmlessly deranged person lacking in common powers of understanding; 3. A cold dessert of mixed fruit with whipped cream or custard. ~Miriam Webster

I think we are safe in saying that the word "fool" used by Jesus does not fit with the third definition put forth by Webster. I have even heard individuals, in speaking of their children or

someone else's children, call that child "evil", or say that they were "bad", or an "evil seed" or even "a child of Satan". You say, "Jesus said *that* to the Pharisees." First, let's get our perspective straight. Jesus is God; and as such, He judged with righteous judgment. Secondly, in the truth of theology, all of us are born as children of the devil, seeking to do his will; but, thank God for His Grace! We, who believe, now have the right to be called sons of God. While it is true that we are to hold each other accountable, we do not have the right to assign guilt and make arbitrary judgments about another's soul. The situations I have encountered are more in keeping with personal justification than an attempt to turn someone from sin to righteousness. "The more the reproach touches the spiritual condition, the worse it is. Malicious slanders and censures are poison under the tongue, that kills secretly and slowly." ~Matthew Henry.

Not only are these three errors different degrees of the same sin, but they also escalate from one to the other. Senseless anger leads to wounding words which, in turn, leads to arbitrary judgment which again can lead to actual murder. What we see here is that anger against the brother or sister is increasing until we find ourselves trying to hurt that person. The wounding becomes intentional. This is because we have not dealt with behavior or impulses in a responsible manner. As a result, we have impacted another person to the point that the whole society suffers. I am appalled at the number of individuals in our own Church who carry the scars or who have been emotionally crippled because of what someone else has said to them or about them. How many individuals have been driven from the Church because of harsh judgments against them? "Thou shalt not murder."

II. Three Degrees of Judgment

It is obvious that three degrees of punishment are in view here! Yet, what those degrees refer to are not so obvious: First is a lesser judgment, signified by the usage of the word "court". Secondly, is a judgment by the Sanhedrin or Supreme Court. Thirdly is the final judgment, also known as The Great White Throne Judgment. Others say this is but an illustration or way of saying that God will render just punishment. I subscribe to the latter. I believe that what is in view here is that God Himself will judge the situation. "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment" (1 Corinthians 11:31).

If then God is judging all of these, why draw a mixed picture of earthly and heavenly judgment? It is because God is showing us that there are degrees of severity. The punishment will fit the crime; and, if that is true in an earthly Court, how much more in God's Court? In each of the cases before us, the KJV states: "In danger of" then tells us the form of judgment. What this means is that the guilty party is bound over to judgment. In our own modern-day terminology, we say that an individual is bound over for trial; but here, it is not a trial that is in view, but a sentence. We are guilty as charged and with the appropriate sentence. One of the reasons Christians have such a difficult time comprehending or accepting this is because we think primarily in terms of the Eternal where our salvation is concerned. Too often, we do this at the peril of our understanding of the present. We have it on good authority that we are right because of the Scripture that states, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," (Romans 8:1). What is difficult for us to grasp is that we can be in covenant relationship with God, be convinced that we are on our way to Heaven; and, at the same time, we can be guilty of breaking this Law, and, therefore, come under judgment.

Third Degree Judgment:

What kind of judgment can we expect for our *senseless anger*? Justice—just recompense, "danger of the court!" A court has the responsibility of rendering judgment according to God's instruction. If a person were found guilty of murder, then his life was to be taken. This is the basis of our present-day capital punishment. If, on the other hand, a person was guilty of unintentional murder—manslaughter; he was guaranteed protection from the avenging family by the courts. In both cases, the court rendered justice. Thus, when we see the admonition against senseless anger, we are being warned that if we engage in such, God will bring judgment against us,

> **Matthew 7:1-2** Do not judge, or you too will be judged. [2] For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.
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> **Galatians 6:7-8** Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. [8] The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

You see, this verse, coupled with Romans 8:1, shows us that senseless anger is not in the realm of the Spirit but is a fruit of the flesh.

Second Degree Judgment:

What kind of judgment is in view when we call someone "stupid?" Here there is "Danger of the Council" or Supreme Court! The Supreme Court, or Sanhedrin, was responsible for judging special cases or matters that the lower court was unable to resolve. The Sanhedrin was composed of the High Priest, who stood as a representation of the Spiritual aspect of the Law; Elders, who represented family concerns; and, Scribes, who represented the legal aspect of the Law.
What is the significance here? It is to point out that this sin has moved from the realm of the physical ie. senseless anger into the more complex area of the soul; and, consequently, the judgment will be more severe. Our words are not just physical sound waves; but have deeper significance because they are able to penetrate into the core of an individual — that part of us that motivates us. In other words, our use of (Raca) destroys the unique area within an individual—his creativity! When we call someone *stupid,* we have touched their soul; and, because of that, we have bound ourselves to judgment – a judgment that will affect *our own* soul. We are still dealing with the temporal here, not the eternal. "For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Matthew 12:37)

First Degree Judgment:

What judgment can we expect when we kill someone's spiritual initiative? This is far more serious for the words used are, "Danger of Hell fire." In other words, this is final judgment! This, obviously, is the most serious of the three. The reason for that is, since judgment has already been exercised regarding the spiritual condition of the victim, the spiritual condition of the assailant is now in jeopardy. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

I was talking with another Pastor recently, and he was sharing how he could not understand the attitudes of some Christians in refusing to be reconciled. He was recounting how a Christian had begged for forgiveness from a Christian brother and was rebuffed. That is why, in the context of Jesus' words on murder, He tells us that when we remember that there is an unresolved problem, our first and foremost responsibility is to get it resolved. God is more concerned with harmony in our relationships than He is with our gifts of praise, or our sacrificial giving.

> It has been noted that when Leonardo da Vinci was painting his masterpiece The Last Supper, he had an intense bitter argument with a fellow painter. Leonardo was so enraged that he decided to paint the face of his enemy as the face of Judas. Having done so, everyone easily recognized the face of the painter with whom Leonardo had quarreled. Leonardo continued on with the painting; but no matter how hard he tried; he could not paint the face of Christ. Something was holding him back. He decided his hatred toward his fellow painter was the problem. So, he worked through his problem by painting another face for Judas; only then was he able to paint the face of Christ and finish his masterpiece.[3]

We will not know the intimacy of Jesus' face as long as there is enmity between us and another Christian. Are you under God's judgment? Has He removed His face from you?

> **Isaiah 59:1-2** "Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. [2] But *your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear*." —Emphasis added.

> **Ezekiel 39:23-24** And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. So I hid my face from them and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. [24] *I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses*, and I hid my face from them. ~Emphasis added.

That is judgment – judgment according to their sin. Verse 25 of that passage goes on to speak of God's mercy! God's mercy is readily available; indeed, the place of prayer is where we can find that mercy (see Hebrews 4:16); but it is an exercise in futility to expect God's mercy when we refuse to show mercy!

> **James 2:12-13** Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, [13] because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Our priority then is to resolve the conflict whether it be with a spouse, a parent, a child or with someone from the past. Likely, it may have been in another church or at another time. Perhaps you are wondering why Christianity and intimacy with God just doesn't seem the same. The reason may well be that there is a work of reconciliation that needs to take place. How can we know?

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[3] Parson's Technology; Ibid.

> **John 14:26** But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

How do we stand? Guilty! Guilty because we have broken God's Law, and guilty because we have specifically broken this commandment! But... that's not all He wrote! 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness" (KJV) —Emphasis added.
The prophet Isaiah had much to say about the condition of Israel with regards to God's Commandments. He called them "obstinate (rebellious) children" and warned of impending judgment,

> **Isaiah 30:1, 12-18** 'Woe to the obstinate children,' declares the LORD, 'to those who carry out plans that are not mine, forming an alliance, but not by my Spirit, heaping sin upon sin;' [12] Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: 'Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, [13] this sin will become for you like a high wall, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant. [14] It will break in pieces like pottery, shattered so mercilessly that among its pieces not a fragment will be found for taking coals from a hearth or scooping water out of a cistern.' [15] This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.' [16] You said, 'No, we will flee on horses.' Therefore you will flee! You said, 'We will ride off on swift horses.' Therefore your pursuers will be swift! [17] A thousand will flee at the threat of one; at the threat of five you will all flee away, till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountaintop, like a banner on a hill.' [18] Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him.

In this passage, the Word shows us that the people of Israel had become guilty of rejecting the Law of God; and, because of that rejection, He would bring judgment upon them. There is something we need to understand about God's judgment: that is, He does not judge simply out of a desire to make Himself feel better. Scripture shows us that God is angry with us for perverting His covenant. That anger does not displace His love, nor does His love negate His anger. Rather, His anger is describing the emotion He feels for our continual neglect of His covenant principles; that anger, while very real, is not the basis nor is it the motivation of His discipline. How do we pervert His Covenant? We twist it until it no longer works as God intended,

> **Hebrews 12:5-13** And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, [6] because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." [7] Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? [8] If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. [9] Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to

> the Father of our spirits and live! [10] Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. [11] No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. [12] Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. [13] "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

There are three truths I want us to consider from this passage; and, because of that consideration, hopefully come to understand that when we break God's Law, we can expect to be disciplined.

I. THE ROOT OF GOD'S DISCIPLINE

The Root of His Discipline is found in Verse Six and Verse Ten. There are two aspects of God's character that form a basis for His dealing with us. Unfortunately, too many times we, His people, have set these two things against each other; or, we have ignored the one in order to promote the other! First, there is His Love, 1 John 4:8 and 16 states, "God is love...." Secondly, there is His Holiness, Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is a consuming fire." (See also Deuteronomy 4:24). If one of these truths is emphasized over the other, we have, either a God who is like milque toast ... a sugar daddy; or, we have a God who is continually whaling on us for the least little infraction and just loves for us to step out of line so He can beat us up. If on the other hand, these are both viewed as His character, then when He disciplines us, it is with the involvement of both aspects of that character. And indeed, that is what is revealed here. The Root of God's judgment stems from His love. As a parent, there were times my children were disobedient; and, anger would well up in me. I would think: "I'll show you!" and my so-called discipline would be more to vindicate me or to appease my anger than it was directed for their good. There were other times, wh en I would be deeply grieved at the direction they decided to go; and, with heaviness of heart, I would have to discipline them. I didn't want to—but I needed to and they needed for me to. The whole focus was changed. I was no longer disciplining because it made *me* feel good, or to ventilate *my* anger, but for *their* ultimate good. Now God may very well be angry when He disciplines, and that anger may guarantee that we are going to be disciplined; but, the discipline itself is not merely the result of His anger, not just for the appeasement of that anger, but for our good, and thus, out of His love and concern for us. The Root of God's judgment stems from His holiness. Verse Ten of Isaiah 35 speaks of the "(High)way of Holiness".

II. THE REASON FOR GOD'S DISCIPLINE

The reason for His discipline is found in Verse Four. "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin." We have not resisted as much as we are able; in fact, we are not only guilty of not resisting but of willfully embracing sin. Like Israel of old, we have resisted God,

> **Isaiah 30:12, 15** Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: "Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and depended on deceit, [15] This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, *but you would have none of it*.' ~Emphasis added.

> **Hebrews 10:26-27** If we *deliberately keep on sinning* after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, [27] *but only a fearful expectation of judgment* and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ~Emphasis added.

Discipline comes because of our *willful* disobedience. Yes, that discipline is a form of judgment; but its purpose is to change our behavior, to change our direction. Its purpose is to lovingly correct our error and bring us back into right fellowship with God. Don't get all hung up over the words, "*There remains no more sacrifice for sins*." *That* is a basic Biblical truth. As long as we are continuing in willful rebellion against God (the meaning of "*If we sin willfully*"), even the sacrifice of Jesus can't reach us. It can only become effective through repentance.

III. The Result of God's Discipline

Verses Ten and Eleven of Hebrews Twelve speak to us of the result of His discipline, "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, *that we may share in his holiness*. [11] No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, *it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace* for those who have been trained by it," ~Emphasis added.

> **Isaiah 30:18-19** Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! [19] O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. ~ Emphasis added.

A return via His Mercy! Mercy is another aspect of God's character. Psalm 116:5 says, "The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion (mercy)." God is merciful, ie. full of mercy, just waiting for us to "come to our senses"; waiting for us to "cry out". That is why at the Throne of Grace the first thing we find is mercy. "Let us then approach the Throne of Grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." Therefore, when God brings judgment, it is for the purpose of correcting us. It is to help us walk right, to help us be right. So it was in Isaiah's day. When God disciplined the people of Israel, He was doing so out of love and with the end in sight of their turning from their sin. His ultimate desire is always to display His mercy. Hallelujah and Amen!

The Atrocity of Murder

Why is murder wrong? Murder is first and foremost a sin against God. Life belongs to God. When a life is cut short through murder, when a life is irreparably damaged through spiritual or emotional murder, the victim no longer has a chance to live life as God intended. The victim has no chance to choose life,

> ...the criminality of the act consists in its being an assault upon the image of God.
> ~Jamison, Faucett & Brown Commentary.

> **Genesis 9:6** Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

Murder is wrong because the time of our death belongs to God,

> **Hebrews 9:27-28** Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, [28] so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

The key to our thought here is the word, *appointed*, which means – the time is set. This is further underscored in Job 14:5. Job is speaking about the length of a human's life, "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;". He had said earlier in Job 1:21 "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

If murder was committed as an act of judgment, it is wrong, because judgment belongs to God. "The verb signifies to slay with pre-meditation and malice." ~Jamison, Faucett & Brown. Deuteronomy 32:35 states, "To me belongs vengeance and recompense." In that Scripture, God is speaking. He is drawing the boundaries of responsibility. It is overstepping ours when we seek to exact vengeance for another's wrong,

> **Hebrews 10:30-31** For we know him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' [31] It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

We've probably all heard the phrase or even used it ourselves: "getting away with murder." Evidently, it must be open season on unwanted children.

> Tiffany Chamberland, of Woolage, Maine, age 22, Maritime Academy student, killed her newborn baby and left it in a garbage dumpster. She... (is) free. She was sentenced to 17 years but the sentence was suspended.[4]

No one gets away with murder. While murder is not the unpardonable sin, if it is not dealt with at the cross and through the blood, it will be dealt with at the throne of God. The apostle Paul reminds us of some sobering truths. Remember, he is writing to Christians.

> **Galatians 5:21** Envying, *murders*, drunkenness, reveling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things *shall not inherit* the kingdom of God. (KJV) ~Emphasis added.

Remember what we said the Kingdom of God is? It is wherever God is King! That thought takes on special significance considering eternity.

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[4] Associated Press; January 12, 1993.

The Apostle John writes:

> Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. (I John 3:15 -KJV)

> Dr. Leo Alexander, consultant to the office of the Chief of Counsel for War Crimes wrote about how German physicians started a trend which resulted in the euthanasia of 275,000 people before the war began. It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic in the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as a life not worthy to be lived. This attitude in its early stages concerned itself merely with the severely and chronically sick. Gradually the sphere of those to be included in this category was enlarged to encompass the socially unproductive, the ideologically unwanted, the racially unwanted, and finally all non-Germans. But it is important to realize that the infinitely small wedged-in lever from which this entire trend of mind received its impetus was the attitude toward the terminally sick. The original euthanasia program to 'purify' the German race was a creation of certain physicians, not Hitler. He simply allowed the use of the tools others had prepared. The first gas chamber was designed by professors of psychiatry from 12 major German universities. They selected the patients and watched them die. Then they slowly reduced the 'price tag' until the mental hospitals were almost empty. They were joined by some pediatricians, who began by emptying the institutions for handicapped children in 1939. By 1945 these doctors had so lowered the price tag that they were killing bed wetters, children with misshapen ears, and those with learning disabilities.[5]

Are we any different today? What about abortion?

Some hidden attributes of this Commandment

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder."

> 'Killing' is not what is prohibited, otherwise the judicial infliction of capital punishment, as well as the slaughter of an enemy in defensive war, would be unlawful – in which light these were certainly not regarded by the Israelites in the time of Moses. ... 'The omission of the object still remains to be noticed, as showing that the prohibition includes not only the killing of a fellow man, but the destruction of one's own life, or suicide' (Kiel). ~Jamison, Faucett & Brown.

It is not murder if it is an act of war or capital punishment. Murder, in all its ramifications, is Satanic. The Bible tells us that Satan was a murderer from the beginning. "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44). Since murder is depriving someone of life before God's intended time, suicide becomes self-murder. It is murder if we destroy someone's emotional life. It is murder if we destroy someone's intellectual incentive. It is murder if we destroy an individual's spiritual hope. It is murder if we take someone's physical life. It is murder, and we won't get away with it. Thou shalt not murder.

Lest you become overwhelmed by all the cries of "guilty," there is hope. This hope lies in the

[5] Wertham, The German Euthanasia Program, Hayes Publishing Co., Cincinnati: 1977; p.7

forgiveness of our sin and the power available for us to be able to change. Let's find that hope in Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Prayer for Forgiveness:
Father, forgive me, because I have not been fully aware of all the areas in which I have been guilty of breaking this Commandment. I want for Your Holy Spirit to have the freedom in my life and in my relationships to warn me when I am in danger of breaking this Commandment. Thank You for revealing to me the high value You place on life. May my life reflect more fully, Yours. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In Chapter Seven, we will come to realize that intimacy is a spiritual as well as a physical act.