

Panthers:

Have you ever been angry...today? Anger is an emotion that moves us to a physiological response. It is possible to be angry and not sin (Eph. 4:26). Anger is a secondary emotion that follows a combination of three primary emotions: hurt, fear, or frustration. Usually, it works like this. Our emotions are stuck in past hurts; our wills reside in the present, frustrated from unmet expectations; and our minds are focused on the future, afraid of its potential outcomes. The result is a soul (emotions, will, and mind) that is out of alignment. We need Christ to align our angry souls.

In His first of *six examples of inside-out righteousness*, Jesus taught His disciples to *be free from anger* (Matt. 5:21-26). In each example, Jesus followed a three-fold pattern: (1) He addressed an Old Testament command saying, "You have heard that it was said;" (2) He alluded to the Pharisees' legalistic interpretation; and (3) He clarified the intent, or spirit, of the law, prefacing His fulfillment with, "But I tell you."

The Old Testament command: "*You have heard that it was said to people long ago, 'Do not murder'*" (Matt. 5:21). Jesus referred to the sixth of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:13). Having the choice of seven words for "murder," Jesus selected one that communicated premeditation and deliberateness, including suicide. The word did not include animal sacrifices, accidents, self-defense, war, or capital punishment. He chose the word for "murder" that flowed from unchecked anger. While we might not murder anyone, each time we harbor anger toward someone, we die a little inside.

The Legalistic Interpretation: "*Anyone who murders will be subject to judgment*" (Matt. 5:21). Jesus alluded to the legalistic interpretation by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Translated, "*Murderers are to be judged.*" Once again, the Pharisees and teachers of the law taught outside-in righteousness which said that one was made right or wrong with God based on what he did on the outside. However, Jesus painted a different picture.

The Spirit of the Law (Heart): "*But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment*" (Matt. 5:22). The spirit of the Law dealt with the heart because God designed us to live from the inside-out. Jesus called His disciples, including us, to a heart condition that desires to *be reconciled: not harboring anger toward anyone in our hearts*. He said that unchecked anger and its name-calling, has consequences, including hell (Matt. 5:23). Jesus said that we should reconcile, or settle our accounts, quickly. We are to do this whether (1) we sin against someone or (2) someone sins against us.

If we are in the middle of a worship service and realize that we have sinned against someone, Jesus said to "Go and come." First *go* reconcile, then *come* and worship (Matt. 5:23-24). If you have sinned against someone, go and come. Go and ask the offended person for a "clean slate," then come and offer your heart for worship.

If someone sins against us and is taking us to court, whether legal or social, we are to settle the matter quickly because it is likely that the un-reconciled conflict will only get worse (Matt. 5:25-26). If this is your situation, try settling the conflict immediately. The only thing that will stop you is anger.

We are to reconcile and not harbor anger in our hearts because it reflects God's heart to do so. God told Moses that He was slow to anger (Exod. 34:6). Paul said that

Jesus was our peace (Eph. 2:14), reconciling the world to God so that we would reconcile with others in order that they would be reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:18-21).

This week, ask God to help you reconcile conflicts quickly, whether you sin against someone or someone sins against you. Be free from unchecked anger and reflect the heart of Christ in you.

Reconciled,

Mitch