

Lesson 7

Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 2

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:21-26

Summary

- Jesus offers specifics on how to develop a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. He exposes their “righteousness” as lacking integrity. The Lord addresses several different areas where this was evident before God (Matthew 5:21-48).
- Jesus will begin by exposing the leaders' interpretation of what the Law taught about anger. The repetitive statement of “You have heard” that Jesus uses is not an attack on the importance of the Old Law. Instead, it is an attack on the leaders' interpretations of the Old Law and their traditions.
- The scribes and Pharisees condemned the act of murder (Matthew 5:21) but saw nothing wrong with being hostile and angry with a brother. Jesus corrected that idea by teaching that in addition to murder; insults, hostility, and anger with a brother is also not pleasing to God.
- Anger is often manifested with insulting language. The word “Raca” that Jesus uses in Matthew 5:22 (KJV) is sometimes translated as “insults” (ESV) or “you good for nothing” (NASB). It is a word that refers to someone as an empty-headed, worthless imbecile.
- The word “fool” (Matthew 5:22b) is another derogatory term people in the first century used to express anger with someone. Jews viewed “fools” as morally corrupt heathens (Psalm 14:1). They lived with no boundaries and awareness of the judgment of God.
- Jesus teaches that, unlike the scribes and Pharisees, His people avoid physical harm to others by cutting off the source. They avoid having anger boil up in their hearts. They avoid ugly, crude, and demeaning words towards others. They avoid letting Satan use bitterness to separate them from their brethren.
- Instead of being angry with a brother, Jesus demands making things right with their brother (Matthew 5:23-26). Before going to worship God, a disciple must initiate reconciliation. A failure to do this will lead to vain worship and the judgment of God (Matthew 5:22b, 25).
- Discipleship requires a constant examination of the heart. When we find anger in our hearts, it will lead to angry words and actions if we allow it to grow and fester. This can be avoided by going to those that we feel have hurt us and making things right.
- While anger is an emotion that we all experience, it can cost us our souls if not managed properly (Ephesians 4:26-27).

Study Questions

1. Why does Jesus describe anger in such a negative way?
2. List some ways in which we often try to justify being angry with brethren.
3. In addition to murder, what are some other sins that can be the result of anger?
4. People who resort to name-calling are in danger of what?
5. How can anger negatively impact our worship? What solution does Jesus offer to overcome anger?
6. Harmonize what Paul says about anger in Ephesians 4:26-27 with what Jesus is teaching here.
7. What often stands in the way of us seeking reconciliation with others? How do we overcome these obstacles?