

The Sixth Commandment

by A.W. Pink

A.W. Pink's sermon on the Sixth Commandment explores the prohibition of murder, its implications, and the importance of managing anger and envy.

Scripture: Genesis 9:6, Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 19:21, Proverbs 13:10, Luke 3:14, Luke 7:8-9, John 8:44, John 18:36, Ephesians 4:26, 1 John 3:12

Topics: "Murder", "Anger Management"

Description

A.W. Pink expounds on the Sixth Commandment, 'Thou shalt not kill,' emphasizing that it not only forbids murder but also the underlying emotions such as anger and hatred that can lead to it. He illustrates how the commandment serves to protect the sanctity of life and the well-being of individuals, warning against the dangers of envy and rash anger. Pink highlights that lawful actions, such as capital punishment and just wars, do not violate this commandment, while also addressing the grave sin of suicide as self-murder. He concludes with practical advice on managing anger and cultivating a humble spirit to prevent the escalation of harmful emotions. The sermon calls for a deeper understanding of the commandment's implications for personal conduct and community relations.

Transcript

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

"Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13). In the first five Commandments we have seen how God safeguarded His own glory; in the second five we are to behold how He provides for the security and well-being of men: (1) for the protection of man's person; (2) for the sanctity and good of his family ("thou shalt not commit adultery"); (3) for the safety of his estate and substance ("thou shalt not steal"); (4) for his reputation or good name ("thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour").

Finally, as a strong fence encircling the whole Law, God not only prohibits outward crimes, but inward motions of evil in our thoughts and affections ("thou shalt not covet"). It is the first of these regulations which specially relates to our neighbor that we shall now consider: "thou shalt not kill." This sixth Commandment prohibits that barbarous and inhuman sin of murder, which is the firstborn of the Devil, who was "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). It is the first crime we read of after the fall of Adam and Eve, wherein the corruption transmitted to their descendants was fearfully displayed by Cain.

His rancor and enmity goaded him to slay Abel, because his brother's "works were righteous and his own evil" (1 John 3:12). But this commandment is not restricted to forbidding the actual crime of murder. It also prohibits all the degrees and causes of murder, such as rash anger and hatred, slanders and revenge, and whatever else may prejudice the safety of our neighbor or tempt us to see him perish when it is in our power to relieve and rescue him. Let us begin by pointing out that every killing of a man is not murder.

It is not so in the execution of justice, when the magistrate sentences a slayer, for he is vested with lawful authority to put capital offenders to death, and if he fails to do so, then God will charge it upon him as sin. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gen. 9:6). These words state the general and unchanging principle. "Thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life" (Deut. 19:21). This is God's order to the magistrate. Nor is the shedding of blood in a righteous war chargeable with murder.

It is lawful to take up arms against an invader and to recover what has been unjustly taken away. Thus David pursued the Amalekites who had carried away his wives captive. It is also lawful in order to punish some great injury or wrong. David made war upon the Ammonites for their outraging of his ambassadors (2 Sam. 10). As there are some who decry this assertion and denounce all war as unlawful in this Christian dispensation, let us point out that when soldiers came to Christ's forerunner for instruction saying, "What shall we do?" (Luke 3:14), he did not say, Fight no more, abandon your calling, but gave them directions how they should conduct themselves.

When the centurion came to the Savior and drew arguments from his military calling, our Lord did not condemn his profession or rebuke him for holding such an office. Instead, He highly commended his faith (Luke 7:8, 9). When examined by Pilate Christ declared, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). Those words clearly imply that though carnal means were improper for advancing Christ's spiritual kingdom, yet had not His state of humiliation prevented His assuming the royal scepter, His followers might lawfully have fought to defend His title.

There is one other exception, namely, accidental slaying, which is not chargeable with murder, that is, when life is taken without any intention of so doing. Such a case we find mentioned in Scripture, as when hewing wood the axe should slip and undesignedly kill a neighbor (Deut. 19:5). For such innocent slayers the Lord appointed cities of refuge, whither they could find safe asylum from the avenger of blood. But let it be pointed out that we must be employed about lawful things.

Otherwise, if we are engaged in what is unjustified and it leads to the death of another, this cannot be excused from murder (see Ex. 21:22-24) Next let us consider cases of murder. Suicide is self-murder, and is one of the most desperate crimes which can be committed. Inasmuch as this sin precludes repentance on the part of its perpetrator, it is beyond forgiveness. Such creatures are so abandoned by God as to have no concern for their eternal salvation, seeing they pass into the immediate presence of their Judge with their hands imbrued in their own blood.

Such are self-murderers, for they destroy not only their bodies but their souls, too. The murdering of another is a most heinous crime. It torments the conscience of its perpetrator with fearful affrights, so that often he gives himself up to justice. Those who are accessories are also guilty of murder, such as those who commission it to be done (2 Sam. 11:15; 12:9), or consent thereto (as Pilate), or conceal it (as in Deut. 21:6, 7, by clear implication) This Commandment not only forbids the perpetration of murder, but likewise all causes and occasions leading to it.

The principal of these are envy and anger. Envy has been well described as "the rust of a cankered soul, a foul vice which turns the happiness of others into our own misery." Cain first enviously repined at the success of his brother's sacrifice, and this quickly prompted him to murder. So too unjust and inordinate anger, if it be allowed to lie festering in the heart, will turn into the venom of an implacable hatred. Such anger is not only a cause, but it is actually a degree of murder, as is clear from the teaching of Christ in Matthew 5:21, 22.

It should be pointed out that anger is not, as envy, simply, and in itself, unlawful. There is a virtuous anger, which (so far from being sin, is a noble and praiseworthy grace, see Mark 3:5). To be moved with indignation for the cause of God when his glory is degraded, His name dishonored, His sanctuary polluted, and His people vilified is a holy anger. So there is an innocent and allowable anger when we are unjustly provoked by offenses against ourselves, but here we need to be much on our guard that we "sin not" (Eph. 4:26).

A vicious and sinful anger, which darkens the understanding and makes one act as in a frenzy, is one which is without cause and without bounds. Jonah 4:1 gives an illustration of a groundless anger. Anger is immoderate when it is violent and excessive, or when it continues to boil. "Let not the sun go down on your wrath" (Eph. 4:26); if it does, the scum of malice will be on your heart next morning! In closing, let us give some rules for restraining and repressing anger. (1) Labor and pray for a meek and humble spirit.

Think lowly of yourself and you will not be angered if others slight you. All contention proceeds from pride (Prov. 13:10). The more you despise yourself the easier it will be to bear the contempt of your fellows. (2) Think often of the infinite patience and forbearance of God. How many affronts does He bear with from us. How often we give Him occasion to be angry with us, yet "He hath not dealt with us after our sins." Let this great example be ours. (3) Beware of prejudice against any, for it is sure to misinterpret their actions. Fight against the first risings of envy and anger; when injured put it down to ignorance or unintentional. (4) Shun angry persons (Prov. 22:24, 25); fire quickly spreads.

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