

Series: Exodus
Title: The Law of Murder
Text: Exodus 21: 12-14
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In this message we deal with the judgment given by God to Moses to be delivered to the children of Israel concerning murder. They are still at Mt Sinai. Moses is actually delivering these judgments to the judges who were to enforce them justly. These judgments are part of the first covenant which the children of Israel were under.

The first covenant of works was made up of three parts: the decalogue (the ten commandments—Ex 20: 1-17), the law of the altar (since they could not keep the law, they had to come to God in a substitute which ceremonially bore their sin and died in their place. Therefore, God provided laws concerning the altar and how they were to make these sacrifices—Ex 20: 22-26) and the civil judgments (Ex 21: 1-23: 33.) These laws are dealt with more in other places, as well.

Together, these three laws made up that one covenant which the children of Israel were under. These laws, making up one law, were all written down in what is called, “*the book of the covenant.*” (Ex 24: 7) Let’s look ahead to see how this first covenant was dedicated:

Exodus 24: 4: And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. 5: And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. 6: And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7: And he took THE BOOK OF THE COVENANT, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. 8: And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

This pictured the blood of Christ who established the law for his people and brought us under the new, everlasting covenant of grace. As Moses was the mediator of the first testament (covenant) delivered to the children of Israel, Christ is the Mediator of the new, everlasting testament (covenant) under which God’s Israel—his elect—are secured. As we see in Exodus 24 and in Hebrews 9 both covenants were dedicated with blood.

Hebrews 9: 18: Whereupon neither the first *testament* was dedicated without blood. 19: For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both THE BOOK, and ALL THE PEOPLE, 20: Saying, This *is* THE BLOOD OF THE TESTAMENT which God hath enjoined unto you. 21: Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22: And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD IS NO REMISSION. 23: *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24: For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26: For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27: And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

So back in our text in Exodus 21, as we go through this law, and all these laws, given at Mt Sinai, keep in mind *“the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”* (Jn 1: 17) Here is the law concerning first degree murder and manslaughter.

Exodus 21: 12: He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. 13: And if a man lie not in wait, but God deliver *him* into his hand; then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee. 14: But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Both these people have broken the law and are guilty of murder. But there is a difference in the two. The person guilty of first degree murder was full of guile; he gave it forethought; he planned it. But the person guilty of manslaughter did not intentionally mean to kill another man.

There is also a difference in the judgment upon these two murderers. The man guilty of first degree murder shall surely die. There was a custom that if a man was guilty of a crime and ran to the altar, the law would not touch him there. But for the man guilty of pre-meditated murder, God said, *“thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.”* But for the man guilty of manslaughter, God said, *“I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee.”*

In Romans 7, the apostle Paul used the law of marriage to give its spiritual meaning to point us to Christ. We saw the spiritual meaning of the law of the bondservant which exalts Christ as God’s willing servant. Then we saw how Christ is such a loving Master that his love makes his people willing to serve him without any need of a law to make us do so, only the constraint of his love. Then we saw in the law of the maidservant how Christ redeemed his bride and provides all things for us. So in this law of murder we will see the spiritual significance as it concerns the sinner and Christ.

Proposition: As we see the difference in these two kinds of murderers and the difference in their judgment, we are reminded of the difference between two kinds of sinners and God’s judgment toward them concerning Christ.

ALL GUILTY

First, it is clear from scripture that every sinner is guilty of murder. We have all broken this law, as well as all the rest of God’s law. Christ the Lord declared,

Matthew 5: 21: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

The law reaches to the heart—to the thoughts and intents of a man’s heart. Christ declared,

Matthew 5: 18: But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19: For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, MURDERS, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Therefore, every son of Adam has broken the law of murder. Scriptures declare there is none righteous among all the sons of Adam, *“their feet are swift to shed blood.”* (Rom 3: 10, 15)

Yet, worse than this, all sinners are guilty of killing the Prince of Life. Speaking of his elect in the day he poured out the spirit of grace and supplication, Christ said,

Zechariah 12: 10:...and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.

Notice, though the man guilty of manslaughter did not maliciously murder, it is not said that he did it by accident—"but God delivered him into his hand." There are no accidents, no chance, with God. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God our Father. (Mt 10: 29) Christ was delivered into the hands of man by God on purpose when he went to the cross and wicked hands did to him what God had before ordained and purposed to be done. (Acts 4: 26-28) Though we were not there, by our sin and unbelief, we all "*killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.*" (Acts 3: 15) Christ said the sin which the Holy Spirit will convince his people of is "*sin...because they believe not on me.*" (Jn 16: 9)

THE DIFFERENCE IN TWO KINDS OF MURDERERS

Still, there is a difference between the two kinds of murderers of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Some are guilty of pre-meditated murder of Christ with guile and malice. They have heard the gospel according to the word of God and willfully rejected the word of God, willfully blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and willfully rejected Christ in apostacy. This is not someone who was regenerated and given faith by God. It is one who had the gospel preached to them and, in that sense, was enlightened as all are who have the word and the gospel preached in truth in their midst. They tasted of the things of the gospel by being amongst believers. Some may have even confessed Christ in baptism and appeared to be truly regenerated. But they apostatized from Christ, renouncing Christ, renouncing the gospel, proving they were never born of God. They crucify the Son of God afresh.

Hebrews 6: 4: For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, 5: And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, 6: If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.

Others are guilty of the murder of Christ, too. But not in the same way as those who apostatize. These are guilty but they know it not and do not reject him in guile. Christ prayed only for his people. He said in his high priestly prayer in John 17, "*I pray not for the world but for them thou hast given me.*" (Jn 17: 9) It was for his elect that he prayed, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.*" (Lu 23: 34) The apostle Paul said,

1 Timothy 1: 13: [I] was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14: And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not using ignorance as an excuse. He said he was guilty: a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. Enmity was in his natural heart as is the case with all sinners by birth. But Paul thought he believed God though he was a blind, lost, unregenerate sinner. He thought he was honoring God, even though he had never kept the law, even though all his pretended law-keeping was sin, he thought he was really keeping it. Paul did not know that Christ is the end of the law for Righteousness to all who believe. Therefore, like his kinsman after the flesh, he had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. (Rom 10: 1) Indeed, he was guilty of the blood of Christ by his unbelief. He was lost, dead in sins, guilty and in need

of salvation. But he did not know the Lord Jesus was the Christ. He did not know that his disciples were the true church of God.

Therefore, Paul did not sin maliciously against light, knowledge, and conscience. His was not that sin against the Holy Ghost which is unpardonable. Like all sinners that God saves by grace, Paul was a poor, blind, spiritually dead, ignorant, hard-hearted sinner—a perfect object of mercy. Therefore, Christ, who is our faithful and merciful High Priest, who has *compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way*, had compassion on him. (Heb 5: 2)

THE DIFFERENCE IN THE JUDGMENT

Lastly, there is a difference in the judgment of these two kinds of murderers.

The *apostate* who deliberately, maliciously turns his back on Christ and the gospel, rejecting the word of God which is breathed by the Holy Ghost and forsakes assembling with Christ's people shall surely die. God declares there is no mercy for the reprobate.

Matthew 12: 31: Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy *against* the *Holy* Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. 32: And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come.

Believers can be in error concerning the Son of man yet be an object of God's mercy and grace and be forgiven through the blood of Christ. Even as believers, we know in part and we see through a glass darkly and we may say things concerning Christ in error. But when a man knowingly, purposely rejects the word of God, rejects the gospel, mocks the word, and scoffs at God, he blasphemes the Holy Ghost. He has forsaken the only forgiveness there is. Even if such a man is found making some last desperate effort in his flesh to feign a profession of Christ as a fire escape from hell, God says "*thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.*"

Esau is an example. He sold his birthright for one serving of beans, rejecting Christ to serve his belly, to live for the pleasure of sin. But then he wanted his birthright back. But it was too late. His father would not repent and give him the blessing thought Esau came with tears, "*For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.*" (Heb 12: 17) It is not our sin as believers that the Hebrew writer speaks of as sinning willfully in Hebrews 10: 6. It is apostatizing from the truth, from Christ, and forsaking assembling where the gospel is preached.

Hebrews 10: 6: For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27: But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28: He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Brethren, I do not know when God has turned a man over to reprobation. But if a professing believer leaves the gospel for years then returns, repents, and confesses that God has truly given him faith, I would receive him, baptize him and forget his past. But the proof of apostasy and reprobation is when a man leaves the gospel and never returns. It is to that man, that God says he shall surely die!

God chose his people will no regard to any works done by us good or evil. But our salvation was based on a work—the work of Christ accomplished in making us righteous and holy. Likewise, God passed by some simply because he has the right to do so. But the reprobation of sinners is always attributed to his own rejection of Christ. Everywhere in scripture we find a sinner turned over to reprobation by God we find the cause to be the sinners rejection of the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2: 10: And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; BECAUSE they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11: And FOR THIS CAUSE God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12: That they all might be damned WHO BELIEVED NOT THE TRUTH, BUT HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

Isaiah 65: 11: But ye *are* they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number. 12: THEREFORE will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: BECAUSE when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose *that* wherein I delighted not. 13: THEREFORE thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: 14: Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.

Romans 6: 23: For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God is righteous. He does not arbitrarily impute first degree murder to an innocent man. God only imputes what a man has been made by a prior act. God imputed sin to Adam's race because Adam made us sin by his disobedience. To the man who has heard the gospel of Christ and rejected Christ, the reason God imputes first degree murder to that sinner is because he received not the love the truth that he might be saved but trod under-foot the Son of God and crucified him afresh and put him to an open shame. God is just.

Likewise, God is just toward those Christ has made righteous by his obedience. For those God chose by grace, God has "*appointed a place whither he shall flee.*" And God will see to it that he flees to the city of refuge. The cities of refuge picture Christ the Refuge of God's elect,

Numbers 35: 6: And among the cities which ye shall give unto the Levites *there shall be* six cities for refuge, which ye shall appoint for the manslayer, that he may flee thither:...

The city of refuge is a type of Christ in that it was where the justice and mercy of God met in harmony and the believer found refuge as it is in Christ.

Deuteronomy 33: 27: The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms

Proverbs 18: 10: The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Consider a few of the ways the cities of refuge typify Christ: one, *God* gave the cities of refuge; likewise, God gave his only begotten Son.

Two, later we will see in Exodus, God told the judges to not wrest judgment: they were not to condemn the just nor clear the guilty; they were to impute to a man what was fact according to the man's innocence or guilt. The city of refuge was where the justice of God's law was upheld. Also, it was where God showed mercy. That city of refuge is Christ. He was in all points made like unto his brethren that he might be the

only one the eye of the law looked upon as the one who deserved justice. He was innocent himself. But as our Head, Christ was made sin that it might be just for God to pour out wrath on him instead of his people. That is the oneness of federal, seminal headship. In all points it behooved Christ to be made like unto his brethren that he might make reconciliation to God for our sins and that he might be a faithful and merciful high priest to his people. Only in Christ is strict justice upheld in perfect righteousness, and at the same time, God is merciful to the believer. In Christ, God is just and the Justifier of him that believeth on the Lord Jesus.

Three, God appointed the cities of refuge for the manslayer *among Israel and among Gentile strangers and sojourners*. God appointed his only begotten Son for God's elect chosen from among Jew and Gentile and appointed us to flee into him. Christ is the city of refuge for his elect scattered throughout the world, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (Jn 3: 16)

Four, for the one guilty of manslaughter, the city of refuge was near. There were three cities on each side of Jordan. (Nu 35: 13-14) Sinner, Christ is the city of refuge near for you to flee into.

Romans 10: 8: The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

THE MESSAGE IN THE LAW OF MURDER

For you have not yet confessed Christ, you may have begun hearing this message as one only guilty of manslaughter, ignorant in unbelief. But you have heard the truth now! Do not be guilty of willfully trampling underfoot the blood of Christ. There is no refuge if we hear the truth and maliciously forsake Christ and tread underfoot his precious blood! FLEE TO CHRIST NOW!

And for you who *have* fled into Christ by faith, remember, the manslayer was safe so long as he abode in the city of refuge. So to you God says, "*And now, little children, ABIDE IN HIM; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.*" (1Jo 2:28)

Psalms 62: 8: Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a Refuge for us. Selah.

Amen!