

# Redefining Anger

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Date: 21 September 2022

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[ 0 : 00 ] Last week we talked about how Matthew chapter 5 verses 17 through 48 make up a new section! That's where Jesus contrasts his teachings with the teaching of the religious leaders.

! Because Jesus taught differently than those religious leaders, people begin to wonder! about Jesus' view of the Old Testament. Even before Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount. In verses 17 through 20, Jesus emphasized and elevated the importance of Scripture. To set up the new material tonight, remember a couple of things that we talked about last time.

J.I. Packer put it best when he said, The fact we have to face is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, who claimed divine authority for all that he did and taught, both confirmed the absolute authority of the Old Testament for others and submitted to it unreservedly himself.

Jesus says that everything he's going to teach is in absolute harmony with the entire teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. There's nothing in his teaching that in any way contradicts those Scriptures. Every time Jesus referred to people and events in the Old Testament, he referred to those things as straightforward historical facts.

[ 1 : 24 ] Verse 20 contained a mind-blowing statement for the first hearers of Jesus' sermon. Verse 20 of chapter 5 says, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said that the righteousness of the religious leaders was insufficient to get them into heaven. Starting with tonight's passage and through the remainder of the chapter, Jesus is going to give us six examples of how the religious leaders have misinterpreted or, at the very least, relaxed God's teaching.

Those six examples redefine anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and the treatment of enemies. We'll get started tonight by studying how Jesus redefines anger. So let's read verses 21 through 26 of Matthew chapter 5. Jesus said, You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to the judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, And whoever says, You fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

[ 2 : 41 ] So if you are offering your gift at the altar, And there remember that your brother has something against you, Leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, Lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. The main idea of the passage is this. Attitudes can be as sinful as actions.

Attitudes can be as sinful as actions. That sentence applies to several of the examples, So we probably will see it again as we work our way through the rest of chapter 5.

Tonight's passage breaks evenly into three sections of two verses each. In verses 21 and 22, we see Jesus redefining the view of ourselves.

[ 3 : 42 ] Redefining the view of ourselves. Look at verses 21 and 22 again. Jesus said, Jesus said, You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says, You fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

Jesus starts this section with what will be a familiar pattern over the next few sections of the sermon. He says, You have heard it, that it was said to those of old.

If you have a King James Version, verse 20 starts with, Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time. And whether what Jesus says next was said to them or by them, Jesus' point is the same. The religious leaders have long been teaching one particular viewpoint. That particular viewpoint was said by the religious leaders since ancient times, and they said it to the people of ancient times. [ 4 : 54 ] Whenever we see Jesus say something like, You have heard that it was said, Jesus will then summarize the human teaching. After that, he will set the record straight about what God really means by what that verse says.

The people of Christ's day lacked copies of the scriptures. For most of the people, the only knowledge they had of the scriptures was what they heard from the scribes and Pharisees at the temple or in the synagogues.

The scriptures were read to them by the religious leaders. These religious leaders then interpreted and explained those scriptures. The people had very few ways of proving whether the interpretation and explanations of scripture were correct.

Lacking the scriptures in their own hands, the people had little chance to search the scriptures themselves. That gave the scribes and Pharisees a great advantage over the people because the people didn't have the scriptures so that they could easily examine the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

Those scribes and Pharisees used this advantage to teach their perverted doctrines, to exalt themselves, and to load the people with heavy burdens. Remember that error always thrives on lack of truth.

[ 6 : 08 ] Jesus is about to set the record straight. Look at all of verse 21 again. Jesus says, You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

So verse 21 contains what the religious leaders have taught. Let's break that down to see whether it lines up with scripture. The first part says, You shall not murder.

Is that scriptural? You shall not murder indeed is scriptural. Exodus 20.13 says, You shall not murder.

So far, so good with what the religious leaders are teaching. But let's look at the next part of what they said. They said, Next, whoever murders will be liable to judgment.

Does that line up with how the law taught that murderers should be treated? Well, the answer to that is no. Listen to Numbers 35. That's chapter 35, verses 30 and 31.

[ 7 : 19 ] If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death. Scripture called for the murderer to be put to death if more than one witness verified the murderer's guilt.

The religious leaders' teaching fell short of God's standard there, and the teaching fell short of God's standard in several other ways. According to rabbinic tradition and to the beliefs of most cultures and religions, murder is strictly limited to the physical taking of another person's life. Remember that Jesus had already warned that God's righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees. As the custodian of God's word, the Jews should have known that God commands heart righteousness, not just external behavior.

But most of them had come to converse in Aramaic rather than Hebrew, and Hebrew was the language of the Old Testament. Because the rabbis had created a vast collection of traditions which they taught in place of the scriptures, the Jews of Jesus' day were ignorant of much of what God had said to them through the Old Testament.

[ 8 : 46 ] Let's take a bit of a detour here to see whether we're being too hard on the Jews when we say that they should have known that God demands heart righteousness. So what does the Old Testament say about that?

Well, here are a few verses. In Psalm 15, 1 and 2, David wrote, O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart. Then in Psalm 51, 6, David wrote, Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the

secret heart.

Here's perhaps the clincher in 1 Samuel 16, 7. Remember, that's when Samuel went to pick out the next king. And in 1 Samuel 16, 7, we see this.

The Lord said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees.

[ 9 : 52 ] Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. Those are just three examples to show that the Jews should have known that God demands heart righteousness in addition to external obedience.

The religious leaders' teaching about murder was wrong because it failed to require God's prescribed penalty. It failed to consider the person's heart and the condition of that heart, and it failed to consider God's holy character.

Nothing was said about disobedience to God's law, about desecrating God's image in which man is made, or about God's role in determining and dispensing judgment.

The rabbis, scribes, and Pharisees had confined murder to being merely a civil issue, and they had confined its prosecution to a human court.

They also had confined its evil to the physical act. They fragrantly disregarded what their own scriptures taught. Check out verse 22.

[ 10 : 53 ] Jesus sets the record straight. He says, Jesus says, The word used for anger here has to do with brooding, simmering anger that is nurtured and never allowed to die.

It's seen in the holding of a grudge or in the smoldering bitterness that refuses to forgive somebody. Jesus was saying, Let me tell you what the scriptures say, what God's truth really is.

You can't justify yourselves just because you've never committed physical murder. Murder goes much deeper than that. It originates in the heart. It starts with evil thoughts, regardless of whether those thoughts are ever brought to action.

So do you see the main idea here? You see why we say that attitudes can be as sinful as actions? Really what Jesus is doing is that he's shattering self-righteousness.

He begins with the accusation that a person is guilty of murder, even if he's just angry with, or if he hates, curses, or maligns another person. That may have shocked his original hearers more than anything he'd said yet.

[ 12 : 36 ] He was just getting started in verse 20 when he blew their minds last week. Jesus declares that a person guilty of murder is guilty of murder even if he just has anger, and so he deserves a murderer's punishment.

Now you see why the heading is redefining our view of ourselves. Likely none of us has committed physical murder, but if we're honest, all of us have been guilty of unrighteous anger.

We fall far short of Jesus' standard, and we fall even further short than what we might have thought. You might have caught something in that last sentence. In this last sentence, I said that all of us have been guilty of unrighteous anger.

Your translation may have a note similar to the ESV. The ESV's note inserts without cause in verse 22, and that would make verse 22 sound like this if you put that note in the verse.

It would say, But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says, You fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

[ 13 : 52 ] Whether or not without cause should be in the verse, that's clearly Jesus' intent. Is there such a thing as righteous anger?

Yes, there really is a thing called righteous anger. Jesus himself spoke in righteous anger against the hypocritical stand taken by the so-called religious leaders of his day.

Paul spoke in justified anger about the legalizers who were trying to undermine the true faith of the Galatian believers. David expressed righteous anger in the imprecatory Psalms, but not very often is our anger like that.

Let's dig into some examples of righteous anger. Matthew 23 is full of woes that Jesus pronounced on the scribes and Pharisees.

We'll just hit a sample. These verses are Matthew 23 verses 13 through 17. Jesus says, .

[ 15 : 16 ] But if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath. You blind fools, for which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?

How do you think the scribes and Pharisees liked hearing that? Those woes continue against the scribes and Pharisees until Matthew 23, verse 36.

We'll skip reading all of those verses except for one. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 23, verse 33. He said, When Jesus pronounced those woes, he did so in a judicial manner.

He did so as one given authority by God. He's actually pronouncing final judgment upon the Pharisees and scribes there. He, as the Messiah, is authorized to do that.

He'd offered the gospel to them, and every opportunity had been given to them to accept it. But they refused it, and they rejected it. We must remember that Jesus always utters these statements against false religion and hypocrisy.

[16:33] What he's really denouncing is self-righteousness that rejects the grace of God and would even justify itself before God and reject Jesus, because that's exactly what they did.

If you and I can always claim that any time we express anger, we do it in a similar sense, then we're free from the sin that Jesus describes in the verses that we've looked at so far.

Does anybody want to claim never having anything but righteous anger? Let's look at one more example of righteous anger.

In Psalm 58, verses 3-9, David wrote, The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray from birth, speaking lies.

They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter. O God, break the teeth in their mouths.

[17:34] Tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord. Let them vanish like water that runs away when he aims his arrows. Let them be blunted. Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime, like the stillborn child who never sees the sun.

Sooner than your pots can feel the heat of thorns, whether green or blaze, may he sweep them away. That'll be the only imprecatory psalm we'll look at, but you get the idea that David was pretty wound up when he wrote those verses.

I actually kind of like the one about let them dissolve into slime. It was very vivid, the pictures that he used. But David, remember, was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he's pronouncing judgment against his own enemies, who are also enemies of God.

The enemies that David denounces are those who are abusing the church and the kingdom of God, as it's represented in both David and in the nation. Listen to what Martin Lloyd-Jones says.

He said, So here's one more chance.

[19:04] Does anybody want to claim having only righteous anger? If we're honest, we must admit that far more often, we're angry at some wrong done against ourselves, whether it's real or imaginary, or maybe even some insult or some undeserved neglect.

But this teaching was not unique to Jesus. John also taught that someone guilty of unrighteous anger is guilty of murder. Listen to 1 John 3, verse 15.

1 John 3, verse 15 is where John wrote, Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Here in 1 John 3, verse 15, John used the term brother in the sense of a fellow believer, but most people think that Jesus' emphasis was wider than that.

Jesus used brother in a broad ethnic sense in the Sermon on the Mount, so he was talking about any Jewish person in that culture. Going back to our text tonight, we need to look at the levels of anger that Jesus mentions.

[20:14] He says, Everyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says, You fool, will be liable to the hell of fire.

So he's saying that basic anger brings judgment, and he's talking about judgment with the local courts there. If we insult somebody, then make somebody liable to the council, which is a reference to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court.

Calling someone a fool can put a person in hell. But Jesus is using the word translated as fool much differently than we typically use it.

That word had acquired both religious and moral overtones. It was applied in the Old Testament to those who denied God's existence, and then they used that denial of God's existence as an excuse for reckless evil doing.

Alternatively, the Greek word may transliterate a Hebrew word, which means a rebel, an apostate, or an outcast. The word here carries the idea again of passing final judgment, and that's eternal judgment on somebody.

[ 21 : 30 ] When we write somebody off as being doomed to hell, we're making a judgment that belongs only to God, and that could indicate that we are in danger of hell ourselves if we write somebody off as if we knew what their heart was.

For a couple of examples of how the Old Testament uses the word fool like Jesus does here in the Sermon on the Mount, listen to these cross-references. And the first cross-reference is from Psalm 14, verses 1 through 3.

Psalm 14, verses 1 through 3 say to the choir master of David, The fool says in his heart, There is no God.

They are corrupt. They do abominable deeds. There is none who does good. The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside. Together they have become corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. So did you hear how fool is used there to refer to the final judgment of God?

[ 22 : 38 ] Psalm 53 carries the same idea. The first three verses of Psalm 53 are nearly identical to what we read in Psalm 14. We'll just read the first verse of Psalm 53 that says to the choir master, According to the Mahawath, a mascot of David, the fool says in his heart, There is no God.

They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity. There is none who does good. If we call somebody a fool like how Jesus uses the term in Matthew 5, verse 22, we in essence are saying that we wish the person were dead and were already in hell.

A person saying that and meaning that has reason to doubt whether he truly is saved. That sentiment runs counter to the character that we've already seen described in the Beatitudes.

Moving to the second session of the lesson now, verses 23 and 24 have Jesus redefining our view of our worship. Redefining our view of our worship.

Here are verses 23 and 24. Jesus said, So if you're offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

[ 24 : 01 ] First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. The commandment not to murder really means we should take positive steps to put ourselves right with our brother.

Jesus gave a practical application of the principles he just stated. His theme was that if anger and insults are so serious and so dangerous, we must avoid them and take action as quickly as possible.

His first illustration is taken from going to the temple to offer sacrifices. Jesus gave the illustration in the cultural terms of his own day. When Jesus spoke those words, the temple still stood and its sacrifices were still being offered.

Jesus reminds us in verses 23 and 24 of a very subtle danger in spiritual life. And that's the terrible danger of trying to atone for moral failure by balancing evil with good.

The danger is that of making certain ceremonial sacrifices to cover up moral failure. The Pharisees were experts at that. They went to the temple regularly.

[ 25 : 12 ] They were always very attentive to the details and tiniest matters of the law. But the whole time they were being attentive to the law, they were judging and condemning others.

They avoided every twinge of conscience by saying, after all, I'm worshipping God. I'm taking my gift to the altar. John Stott restated Jesus' illustration in more modern terms.

And this helps us see how the illustration applies to us. He said, if you are in church in the middle of a service of worship and you suddenly remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave church at once and put it right.

Do not wait till the service has ended. Seek out your brother and ask his forgiveness. First go, then come. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your worship to God.

That is why Pastor Mike almost always cites Matthew chapter 5 verses 23 and 24 before we observe communion. Our heart attitude is so important to God that God would rather us leave worship so that we can be reconciled to a brother.

[ 26 : 26 ] When you think about it, humans always find it easier to substitute the ceremonial aspects of religion for the demands of a clear conscience before God. In ancient times, this meant the presentation of sacrifices at the temple.

Today, it means the attendance of a Christian at church, his participation in a Bible study or prayer meeting, or his giving to the church or missionaries. God says that these things are worthless from God's point of view if there is unconfessed sin and failure on the Christian's part to make that sin right.

We know that worship is important, but we never can worship properly if we treat others differently than what Jesus commands. If we worship when we're holding a grudge against someone, we're being hypocritical, just like the scribes and the Pharisees were.

Remember what Jesus said in verse 20 about the scribes and Pharisees. That's where he said, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The concept that Jesus teaches in verses 23 and 24 may have been different than what the people had heard from the religious leaders, but it's biblical.

[ 27 : 39 ] Consider what happened when King Saul disobeyed God and made improper sacrifices. We'll go to 1 Samuel 15, verse 22, and that's where Samuel was speaking to King Saul.

That verse says, Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams.

So the key there is to obey is better than sacrifice. God's standards are as inflexible as God's holiness. If we want to walk in fellowship with the holy God, we have to conform not only in action, but also in thought and attitude.

And this means that my life must be subject to the authority of Scripture, not only the external life, but also the thought life. So if I harbor jealousy, bitterness, anger, malice, or wrath against my brother in Christ, I'm a murderer in the sight of God.

God has revealed His love to capture my heart and to win my heart to Him. And as I've been attracted to Him through the love manifested at the cross, I owe Him my love.

[ 28 : 56 ] Giving Him my love, I have to love another. And that's how J. Dwight Pentecost summarized Matthew 5, verses 23 and 24. So, so far, we've seen Jesus redefining the view of ourselves and our worship.

In verses 25 and 26, we see Jesus redefining the view of our accusers. Redefining the view of our accusers.

The illustration that Jesus gave in verse 23 and 24 deals with how we should treat a brother. Here in verses 25 and 26, He gives an illustration about how we should treat an adversary.

So listen to verses 25 and 26 again. Jesus said, Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. The point is that urgency to take steps now to reconcile and to restore the friendship are important because court proceedings and the results may make it impossible later.

[ 30 : 12 ] If quarrels are allowed to continue, they breed bitterness and the relationship may become damaged beyond repair. Some believe that in Jesus' example here, Jesus is intending for us to see God as the judge.

And if we should interpret God as the judge, sin against another must be resolved to avoid having to face a sentence from the divine judge. Being thrown into prison and being unable to get out until the debt is paid is an analogy of God's punishment.

Some people argue exactly what the sentences mean there, but the basic teaching is plain and unmistakable. We're to make every effort without delay to put our relationship right with our accuser before our relationship can be right with God.

And by trying to put things right and doing whatever we can to put those things right, we avoid God's chastening for that. Jesus was saying that sin has consequences.

If you want to avoid the consequences, you need to confess sin and make the sin right as soon as possible. He was only saying in different words what Paul later said to the Ephesians, and he was recognizing the principles stated in Hebrews 12.

[ 31 : 27 ] Ephesians 4, verses 26 and 27 say, Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

Then Hebrews 12, verses 14 and 15 say, Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

Those are some verses to take heart as we seek to apply this passage. Here's another quote from John Stott. Listen to what he has to say about how the Ephesians passage and the Hebrews passage relate to tonight's passage from the Sermon on the Mount.

Stott said, How seldom do we heed Christ's call for immediacy of action. If murder is a horrible crime, malicious anger and insult are horrible too.

And so is every deed, word, look, or thought by which we hurt or offend a fellow human being. We need to be more sensitive about these evils.

[ 32 : 40 ] We must never allow an estrangement to remain, still less to grow. We must not delay to put it right. We must not even allow the sun to set on our anger, but immediately, as soon as we are conscious of a broken relationship, we must take the initiative to mend it, to apologize for the grievance we have caused, to pay the debt we have left unpaid, and to make amends.

These extremely practical instructions Jesus drew out of the Sixth Commandment as its logical implications. If we want to avoid committing murder in God's sight, we must take every possible positive step to live in peace and love with all men.

Remember the main idea, and that's attitudes can be as sinful as actions. Here's a question to ask yourself without giving an answer out loud.

How do you measure up to how Jesus redefines the view of ourselves, of our worship, and of our accusers? Perhaps like I did, you think you failed to measure up.

So that leads to an obvious question and that, of course, is where do we go next? The first answer to that question is to consider what we've already learned in the Sermon on the Mount.

[ 33 : 58 ] Look at how many of the Beatitudes pertain to tonight's verses. To properly respond to Jesus' teaching in the verses tonight, we must exhibit all of the characteristics in the Beatitudes, except perhaps the one about being persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Jesus' words in our verses tonight should drive us to be poor in spirit, to mourn over sin, to hunger and thirst for righteousness, to be merciful, to be pure in heart, and to be peacemakers.

When we exhibit these qualities, Jesus already has promised us that we will become citizens of the kingdom of heaven. He says we will be comforted, we will inherit the earth, we will be satisfied, we will receive mercy, we will see God, and best of all, we will be called sons of God.

Listen to this John MacArthur quote about Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 through 26. He said, In the fullest sense, of course, because no one ever fully has right attitudes toward others, no worship is acceptable.

Thus, everything Jesus teaches in this passage, as in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is to show the absolutely perfect standard of God's righteousness and the absolutely impossible task of our meeting that standard in our own power.

[ 35 : 20 ] He shatters self-righteousness to drive us to his righteousness, which alone is acceptable to God. Listen to that last part again. He said, Everything Jesus teaches in this passage, as in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is to show the absolutely perfect standard of God's righteousness and the absolutely impossible task of our meeting that standard in our own power.

He shatters self-righteousness to drive us to his righteousness, which alone is acceptable to God. Considering the impossibility of meeting God's righteous standard on our own, does that mean we should just give up?

I'm glad I see you shaking your heads out there. What we really should do is ask God to transform us and our attitudes as much into God's own attitudes as possible.

We have to ask God to change our heart because only God is able to change our hearts. When we do, God also will change our minds. We will be transformed from within by the renewing of our minds.

We'll find it possible to do what beforehand we would have judged impossible to do. That's a reality and the reason why we know that is because the Bible tells us so.

[ 36 : 39 ] Listen to Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2 are where Paul wrote, I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

James Montgomery Voice said, Do you know that God says that this will be possible for you even if the other person does not return the favor and maintains a white-hot temperature of anger against you?

He cites other verses in Romans chapter 12 to make his point, so listen to Romans chapter 12, verses 19 through 21. Paul wrote in Romans chapter 12, verses 19 through 21, Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head.

[ 38 : 00 ] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. God says that if we live as he intends us to live, the wrath of man will come, but when it comes, God himself promises to protect our interest.

He may protect them here, but we may not see them be protected until we get to heaven, but one day we will get to heaven, and there those who have lived as Christ says we should live will be vindicated in the end.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good is a hard statement to accept. In fact, it's an impossible statement to accept if the heart remains unchanged, but God will change the heart if the life is surrendered to Christ for transformation.

So even with all this knowledge about God working to transform our heart, what should we do when we inevitably sin? Well, listen to one last Martin Lloyd Jones quote for tonight.

It's a little long, but it's worth hearing. Martin Lloyd Jones said, thank God that his terms are very easy. They are just this, that I face and acknowledge this sin and confess it utterly and absolutely, that I stop any self-defense or self-justification.

[ 39 : 19 ] I must confess and admit the sin without any reservation to God. If there is something in actual practice that I can do about it, I must do it at once. I must humble myself.

Then God will tell me that all is right, I will settle with you. He will say, indeed, I will forgive it all because although you are a guilty and foul sinner before me and the bill you owe me is one you can never pay, I have sent my son into your world and he has paid the bill for you.

He has canceled it. He did not do it because you are loving and kind and good. He did not do it for you because you have done nothing against me. He did it while you were an enemy, hateful in yourself, hating me and hating others.

Despite all your foulness and your unworthiness, I sent him. He came deliberately and gave himself even unto death. And then he says, God tells us, because of all this, I forgive you utterly and freely and absolutely.

So listen to that last sentence again. Because of all this, I forgive you utterly and freely and absolutely. I find it interesting that he started off that quote by saying, thank God his terms are very easy.

[ 40 : 36 ] And I'm thinking that when I look at that next sentence and he says that his terms are just that I face and acknowledge the sin and confess it utterly and absolutely, I don't necessarily think that that is easy to do.

That's also why we need to ask God to reveal our sin and help us get to the point where we can freely and totally confess our sins to him. So are you starting to see the Beatitudes becoming more than just words?

When Jesus spoke the Beatitudes, he knew that his subsequent actions would make those words into reality. And that's why he could say, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. And then going over to Colossians 2, verses 13 and 14, those verses remind us, and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.

This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder tonight just how far we fall short of your standards.

[ 42 : 01 ] Always let that humble us when we become tempted to think of ourselves similar to how the Pharisees and scribes thought of themselves. But also thank you for the reminder that you

didn't leave us in our sin.

You provided a way for us to be reconciled to you. Help us always be grateful and always keep the cross of Jesus in mind and what it accomplished for us. In Jesus' name we pray.  
Amen.