

It's What's Inside That Counts

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Matthew 5:20–22

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:20

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Introduction

Take God's Word and turn, today, to Matthew chapter 5 as we continue our series in the Sermon on the Mount. And, the title of the message today: "It's What's Inside That

Counts.”

¶ When Howard Carter discovered the tomb of ol’ King Tut in 1924, he found that King Tut was buried in a coffin. I have seen the coffin. I have been to Egypt, to an Egyptian museum, and seen this huge sarcophagus, this coffin that they buried ol’ King Tut in. First of all, there was the large outer coffin. When they opened that, they looked inside, and there was another coffin overlaid with gold. They looked inside of that, and there was another coffin. Inside that one was another coffin of solid gold. When they looked inside there, there was King Tut, wrapped in gold cloth. And, he had a gold mask on his face. You’ve seen that beautiful solid gold mask covering his face. But, when they took that off and unwrapped the gold cloth, inside was a dead, shriveled, leathery corpse. Outside—very beautiful; inside—a dead man’s bones. It’s what’s inside that counts, not the outer covering that we sometimes wear and the façade of gold that we put on to try to hide the decaying spiritual life.¶

The Pharisees were past masters at this: outwardly, they looked so good, but Jesus said, “On the inside, you are a dead, putrefying, spiritual corpse.” Begin to read here in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 20. Jesus said, “*For I say unto you...except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:20) Now, I’ve tried to think what a church full of scribes and Pharisees would be like. Well, number one, Brother Dan: They’d be here every Sunday. Number two: They’d be on time. Number three: They’d all be carrying Bibles. Number four: They’d all be tithing. Number five: They’d never curse, or swear, or drink, or get drunk, or commit adultery. Number six: They’d all go to hell. Outwardly, they were very righteous, but Jesus said, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:20)

Now, He’s talking not about what’s on the outside, but He’s talking about what’s on the inside. And then, He gives six illustrations, and these six illustrations are used by the Lord Jesus just to rip away the façade of self-righteousness and show the Pharisees what was truly down deep in their heart.

Now, the first of these six illustrations we’re going to talk about today is in verses 21 and 22. Here’s the first one: “*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 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.*” (Matthew 5:21–22)

Now, I want to say again that the Pharisees had a form of religion that was outward. It was external. It was superficial. It was hypocritical. Don’t turn to it, but let me tell you

how Jesus described them. It's really humorous the way Jesus described them. In Matthew chapter 23—just put it in your margin—verses 23 through 25, Jesus said, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin.”* (Matthew 23:23) Do you know what they did? They were so careful. If they have a little mint plant—you know, mint like you put in your iced tea—they'd say, “Well now, that plant belongs to God so I've got to count the leaves: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—this tenth leaf, that belongs to God.” So, they'd pick off the tenth leaf, and they'd tithe that tenth leaf. I mean, everything belonged to God. The tithe belonged to God—and it does. Jesus didn't say they were wrong to tithe. He said, *“These ought ye to have done.”* (Matthew 23:23)

But, let me back up and give the whole verse: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith”—now, tithing, that's external; judgment, mercy, and faith, that's internal—“these ought ye to have done”—you ought to tithe—“and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides”—can you imagine anything more ridiculous than somebody who is supposed to be a guide who's blind?—“which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel”—don't tell me Jesus didn't have a sense of humor. I'm sure this one had them in the aisles. Here's a guy gagging at a gnat; and then, on the other hand, here comes a camel all the way down. I see his tail going in. And, you strained at a gnat; you gagged at a gnat. You swallow a camel. And then, He says (evidently, He'd been watching a man wash dishes)—“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.”* (Matthew 23:23–25) Here's a man who does dishes. All he does is wipe the outside and put them back in the cupboard, and on the inside, he hasn't touched them. And, Jesus said, “That's the way your religion is. You're a blind guy; you're gagging at gnats, swallowing camels. When you do the dishes, all you're doing is wiping the outside; you're leaving the inside full of filth.” And, our Lord's first concern is not the outside; our Lord's first concern is the inside. It's what's inside that counts. Sin is an inside job, and so is righteousness an inside job.

¶ I've often used this illustration about a log in the sawmill. You may take a crooked log out of the forest, put it in the sawmill, lop off one side, lop off the other side, lop off the other side, lop off the other side, and it's perfectly straight. But, if you look at it from the end, the heart is still crooked—the heart is still crooked.¶

And, the Pharisees, their lives were so straight on the outside. But, on the inside, their heart was still crooked.

¶ One time, years ago, I was working in a Billy Graham crusade as a counselor. After

the service, a girl came forward, and she wanted to give her heart to Christ. And, we dealt with her back there in the back after the service. And, the girl's mother was a socialite, and she was mortified that her daughter had come down there with the rest of those sinners to give her heart to Christ because to this woman that was an affront. It actually embarrassed her that her daughter "needed to be saved." And so, the mother was back there in the counseling room protesting, and she was saying, "Sweetheart, you don't need this. Darling, Mamma knows you. You're a good girl." And, I never will forget what that teenage girl said as she looked into her mother's face. She said, "Mother, you can't see my heart." This girl knew that she was a sinner, and she knew that she needed to be saved. But, the mother was so much like these Pharisees so long ago. It's what's inside that is the problem.†

Listen to me, my dear friend: a man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he's a sinner. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. Jesus said, "All of these things come out of the heart." (Matthew 15:18) And, that's the reason Jesus said that our righteousness has to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. And, many of those people that Jesus witnessed to and talked to never got saved because they never did see that they were sinners.

First of all, you've got to get a man lost before you can get him saved. And, the Apostle Paul wrote about these same people when he said in Romans chapter 10 and verse 3: "*They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*" (Romans 10:3) And so, what our Lord Jesus Christ is going to do here in the Sermon on the Mount—He's going to rip away the veil; He's going to shatter the self-righteousness of these people, and He's going to show them their need of Him and their need of regeneration. That's the reason He says down in verse 20: "*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" (Matthew 5:20)

I. The Malice of Murder

And then, He gives the first of six illustrations. This first one has to do with murder. Now, He speaks in verse 21 of the malice of murder: "*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill.*" (Matthew 5:21) And indeed, that is true—indeed, it is true. No one should commit murder. Of course, our Lord is quoting from Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13, the Ten Commandments, that simply say, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" (Exodus 20:13)

A. Not All Killing Is Forbidden

Now, let me say parenthetically here that the Ten Commandments do not forbid all killing. When the Bible says, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* (Matthew 5:21) that literally means “Thou shalt do no murder.”

1. The Bible Does Not Forbid the Killing of Animals

For example—and you might want to turn to Exodus chapter 20, where this is found—the killing of animals is not forbidden. Some people think that it’s wrong to kill animals, but the Bible doesn’t tell us that it’s wrong to kill animals. As a matter of fact, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 24, right after He says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13) in verse 13, in verse 24, He says this: *“An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.”* (Exodus 20:24) There was nothing wrong with the sacrificing of these animals. When God said, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* (Exodus 20:13) He wasn’t referring to animals. No one should be cruel to animals, but it’s all right to use animals for food. Jesus ate fish and a honeycomb, did He not? Don’t tell me Jesus was a sinner. Don’t tell me Jesus did wrong. He did not. There is no sin found in the Lord Jesus. The Bible does not proscribe or forbid the killing of animals.

2. The Bible Does Not Forbid Capital Punishment

The Bible does not forbid capital punishment. In Exodus chapter 20, where the Bible says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13)—and read this and mark it if it’s not marked in your Bible—the Bible also says in Exodus 21 and verse 12: *“He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.”* (Exodus 21:12) That’s what God’s Word says: you kill somebody, you have committed a crime worthy of death. And, when the Bible says in the Ten Commandments, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* (Exodus 20:13) it does not forbid capital punishment.

Now, no Christian should ever take personal revenge. That’s not up to us. We never have a right—we never have a right—to take the life of another person. And yet, the government is ordained to do that. Read Romans chapter 13, (Romans 13:3–4) and read also Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6: *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”* (Genesis 9:6) You see, God did not save us because He doesn’t value human life; it’s because He does value human life. Capital punishment is clearly taught in the Bible, and the person just has to deny the Word of God to deny capital punishment.

3. The Bible Does Not Forbid Killing in Self-Defense

When the Bible says, *“Thou shalt no kill,”* (Exodus 20:13) it doesn’t proscribe the killing of animals; it does not forbid, tragic as it may be, capital punishment; and the Bible does

not forbid, tragic as it may be, the necessity to defend your loved ones sometimes by taking another life. If you go on in Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3, God says, *“If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him”*—that is, if somebody is breaking into your house and you smite him and he dies, you’re not going to die because of that. But, the Bible says—*“If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution.”* (Exodus 22:2–3) Now, what does that mean? It means that if you kill a thief when it wasn’t necessary to kill him—just because he was stealing in broad, open daylight; you’re not in danger—then you are guilty. The thief is guilty, but you have no right to take his life. But, you do have a right to protect your loved ones. You have an obligation to protect your children. You have an obligation to protect your wife and family—a responsibility.

B. Types of Killing That the Bible Forbids

But Jesus, here, is speaking to the Pharisees, and the whole time He is saying this first part, “You’ve read, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’” (Matthew 5:21) they’re all nodding their heads because the Pharisees would not think of committing murder. As a matter of fact, what is forbidden when it says, *“Thou shalt not kill”*? (Exodus 20:13)

1. Homicide

First off, obviously, the crime of homicide. And, America has become the murder capital of the world. We have coldblooded people who are gunning down innocent citizens—and armed robberies. We have people who are taking revenge on people they do not like. We have rapists and others who are murdering people and sacrificing them on the altar of their lust, and their blood cries out from the ground to a holy God. And, God is not deaf to these cries, and God is going to avenge the blood of these people who are killed by homicide. Homicide is what is forbidden.

2. Suicide

Suicide is forbidden. *“Thou shalt not kill.”* (Exodus 20:13) You don’t have a right to kill yourself. You don’t have a right to take your own life because it is not your own; it belongs to God. You say, “Well, I have problems that are incurable.” No, my dear friend, you have no right to play God. The most incurable disease, the most constant pain, the most severe trouble, the deepest heartache, the worst persecution—no matter what is—and my heart goes out and my heart is broken for what some people are suffering—but let me tell you, my dear friend, suicide takes the matter out of God’s hands and puts it into your hands, and you have no right to do that. God alone is wise enough, God alone is strong enough, God alone is good enough to handle your problem. But, I’m talking to somebody here who has ever contemplated such a thing. Do not do it! Do not do it! You do not have the wisdom, the judgment, to do this. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 13: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common*

to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted—that word means “tested”—“*above that ye are able; but will with the [test]*”—“*will with the temptation*”—“*make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*” (1 Corinthians 10:13) God will give you grace, and God will meet your need. Wait on Him. Wait on Him! There’s hardly anything anyone can do that would cause more shame, and more sorrow, and more heartache to a family than suicide.

“Say, pastor, could a Christian commit suicide?” Well, if a Christian is mentally deranged or takes his or her eyes from the Lord, that is a possibility—but a tragic possibility! My dear friend, a person who commits suicide will be so ashamed when he faces God.

3. Infanticide

“Thou shalt not kill.” (Exodus 20:13) You have no right to take another’s life because of the value of human life. You have no right to take your own life. This would include homicide, suicide. It certainly includes infanticide, taking the lives of little babies. And, my heart is so sick. Last Friday night, I went to Dallas to speak in a rally for the unborn. Thank God for these who are standing up for those who won’t stand up—or cannot stand up—for themselves. I am heartsick that in America we are so concerned about the spotted owl, we are so concerned about the whale, we are so concerned about the snail darter, we’re so concerned about the bald eagle—and we ought to be; nothing wrong with that—but what is wrong with a nation that will slaughter the innocent and make all this fuss about a spotted owl? Something very sick in America! Something very wrong in America!

You say, “Well, it’s legal.” Everything that’s legal is not right. I think maybe we ought to abort the court. These people who kill these little babies, I feel like saying, “Why don’t you pick on somebody your own size?” It’s wrong to do that. I want to tell you what Dr. Gallup, the researcher and pollster, said. He said, “If a doctor will take money for killing the innocent in the womb, he will kill you with a needle when paid by your children.” God is going to judge—God is going to judge—America.

II. The Acid of Anger

And, while Jesus is saying, “You’ve heard it said, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’” (Matthew 5:21) the Pharisees were there nodding their heads, saying, “That is right—that is right. We would not commit homicide. No, we would not commit suicide. No, we would not commit infanticide.” And so, they wrapped themselves in the robe of self-righteousness, and they are saying, “We are fine.” But, Jesus didn’t stop there. Not only did Jesus speak of the malice of murder; then Jesus began to speak of the acid of anger. And look, if you will, as Jesus continues now in verse 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.” (Matthew 5:22)

Now, Jesus is going to destroy the illusion of self-righteousness. Do you see? There was one sin that the Pharisees were sure that they were not guilty of, and that was the sin of murder—just like many of this congregation who are so sure that you don’t have murder in your heart; at least, murder on your record. But, what the Lord Jesus is going to show is that hatred is an acid that destroys its container. And, our Lord goes beyond the act of murder to the attitude behind it—beyond the murder to the motive—to show what really causes people to kill.

¶ A little boy was doing his homework, so I’m told, and he asked his dad—he said, “Dad, what causes people to go to war? Why do people kill each other in war?” “Well,” he said, “son, it’s like this. If you want to know what causes war,” he said, “for example, in World War I,” he said, “Germany invaded Belgium.” And, the mother came in. She was drying her hands, and she had been doing dishes. And, she said, “No, no, father, that’s not the way it is. Here’s the way that war started.” He said to her, “Look, do you want to answer the question or do you want me to answer the question? Did he ask you or did he ask me? Besides that, you don’t know anything about it. Why don’t you butt out of this conversation?” She said, “What do you mean I don’t know anything about it?” And, she threw her dishtowel on the floor, turned around, and slammed the door. You could hear the dishes rattling in the cabinet. And, he said, “Now son, let me tell you how wars start.” He said, “No thanks, Dad. I already know.” You know, it comes out of the heart.¶

A. Types of Anger That Come Out of the Heart

And, that’s what our Lord Jesus is about to show, and He speaks here of angers.

1. Caustic Anger

First of all, He speaks of caustic anger, where, He says, you’re angry with a brother. (Matthew 5:22) That is, somebody’s done something to you. I don’t know what they did to you, but they did something; they did you wrong. And so, you’ve got that caustic anger. You feel that corrosive acid, that caustic acid, building up in you.

2. Contemptuous Anger

And, that caustic acid, that caustic anger, turns to contemptuous anger. What you say there is “*Raca*.” (Matthew 5:22) You say, “What does that mean?” Did you know we don’t have an English translation for that? That’s an untranslatable word. That’s the reason they just put in the Bible, “*Raca*.” (Matthew 5:22) Do you know what it means? It means, “You don’t have any value. I don’t value you.” Some translations translate it this way: “worthless one.” It’s actually a term of contempt. Racial prejudice is wrapped up in

this word. When you look down on other people, you feel that you are superior to other people—whatever it is, that air of superiority. You see, somebody takes somebody else's life because they do not see the worth, the value, of every single human being.

3. Condemning Anger

There's caustic anger. And then, there is contemptuous anger. And then, there is condemning anger. Our Lord says, "You say, 'Thou fool,' you will be in danger of hellfire." (Matthew 5:22) The word *fool* here—He's not talking about saying somebody is foolish, but you have to understand what the word *fool* meant in the Bible. The word *fool* here actually involves moral perversity and godlessness and wickedness. A person who is a fool, unless he gets redeemed and saved, is certainly going to hell, certainly damned, certainly lost. The Bible says there's no hope for the fool. (Proverbs 26:12; Proverbs 29:20)

So, you see what a person has done? Caustic anger, contemptuous anger, condemning anger. Somebody's hurt, and something begins to burn and boil and seethe in his heart. That is very wrong. Now, the Bible says in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 15: "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*" (1 John 3:15)

You say, "Pastor Rogers, is all anger wrong?" Of course not! Some anger is very good. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 26 says, "*Be ye angry*"—that's a command—"and sin not"—that's a command too—"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." (Ephesians 4:26) Your wrath is wrong, but righteous anger is different. You see, there is a righteous anger. In the Old Testament, eighteen times you read of the anger of the Lord. We read in the New Testament where Jesus was moved with anger when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple. (Matthew 21:12–13; Mark 11:15–17)

You can tell the size of the man by what makes him angry. What makes you angry? You miss a putt—do you wrap your putter around a tree? Is that what makes you angry? Somebody gets your parking place, and you blow a fuse? You tell the size of a man by what makes him angry. Do you know the way to be angry and sin not? It's to be angry only at sin. Jesus was moved with anger, but the anger that Jesus warns about is the anger that gives Satan a foothold in his life.

Now, I want you to just put a bookmark there in Matthew 5, like I'm going to, and I want you to turn to Ephesians 4 here. Let me show you something about anger—when our Lord speaks of being angry without a cause and the danger that will cause. Turn to the book of Ephesians, and I want you to look in verses 26 through 31. Do you have it? All right, look in verse 26: "*Be ye angry*"—see, there's our command—"and sin not"—there's the first responding command—"let not the sun go down upon your wrath"—now, if you were angry for the wrong reason, don't go to bed angry. Husbands and

wives, never go to bed back to back—*“let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil”*—when, my dear friend, you get this anger in your heart, this wrath there, and you go to bed with it, you don’t deal with it, you give it a place there, do you know what you have done? You’ve just cleared off a space for the devil to come encamp. You have given the devil a campground, a lodging place, a sanctuary in your life. That is the devil’s lawful, rightful place, is your anger, and he’ll move into it. Now, verse 28—*“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth”*—now, you wouldn’t think of stealing, or you wouldn’t think of cursing, I hope—*“but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption”*—most Pharisees would not steal, and most Pharisees would not let corrupt communication come out of their mouth. But now, watch what our Lord says in verse 31—*“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”* (Ephesians 4:26–31)

B. The Progression to Malice

Now, I’ve shown you this before, but I want you to slow down and see how wise the Scriptures are. I want you to see why anger is behind murder. Now, watch this progression; watch these five steps.

1. Bitterness

First of all, *“all bitterness.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Do you see the word *bitterness*? Do you see it? Look at it in verse 31: *“Let all bitterness...”* (Ephesians 4:31) Do you know what bitterness is? Bitterness is a feeling of resentment that settles down in your heart when you feel somebody has done you wrong. Maybe they have overlooked you; maybe they have abused you; maybe they have insulted you; maybe they have hurt you in some way—and you get a feeling that the Bible calls “bitterness.” Now, it’s not yet anger; it’s just bitterness. You just feel bad in here, and you’re carrying that resentment.

2. Wrath

But now, the word *bitterness* is followed by the word *wrath*. Do you see it? Look in verse 31: *“wrath.”* (Ephesians 4:31) Now, what is wrath? Wrath comes from a Greek word that means “to burn.” You’re doing a slow burn. Did you ever feel that slow burn on the inside? A lot of antacid companies are happy that you have it. It’s that slow burn that’s in there. It’s just that heat that comes. First, bitterness; and then, that bitterness turns to wrath. It’s kind of like smoldering rags in a closet—just doing that slow burn.

3. Anger

And then, the next word is *anger*. (Ephesians 4:31) Somebody opens the closet door,

and oxygen comes to those smoldering rags that are in a state of spontaneous combustion. And, suddenly the flame just bursts and begins to flame brightly, and that which is smoldering bursts into flames. That's anger. People fly off the handle. Have you ever seen anybody just fly off the handle just like that? I mean, they'll tell you off in a second, or they'll pick up things, or throw things, or slam a door, or pound their fist, or kick something. And, you say, "Man, what got into them?" I'll tell you what has gotten into them: already—you couldn't see it—but there was bitterness; and then, there was wrath. After the bitterness came the wrath, and then came the anger. What you thought happened at a moment had been happening a long time ago. That bitterness was there. That bitterness turned to wrath. And finally, those smoldering rags of wrath opened into the fires and flames of anger.

4. Clamor

But, the devil is not finished yet. After that anger comes clamor. Do you see the word *clamor*? Look at it verse 31: "*clamour*." (Ephesians 4:31) Do you know what the word *clamor* means? It means "loud talking." You raise your voice. You shout or you cry. A person says, "Why did you do that?" You say, "Well, now wait a minute. Don't shout." "I'm not shouting." And, your voice gets louder, and you begin to clamor and to say all kinds of wicked things, loud things. You just find yourself expressing yourself in a way that's unbecoming.

5. Evil Speaking

But, you're not finished yet. You're on a roll now; and so, the next thing is "*evil speaking*." (Ephesians 4:31) You see, once you raise your voice, once you get into this attitude, then you begin to evil speak. You begin to say things that you ought not to say. You will say to a child, "You will never amount to anything." You'll say to a wife, "I am sorry that I married you." You'll say to a brother, "I wish you were dead." Now, you say terrible, horrible, hateful, hellish things, and the devil's just sitting over there in the corner just laughing and saying, "Tell them this, also." And, it's evil speaking. You're out of control.

Do you know there's a school of psychology that says it's good for you to vent your anger? Have you ever heard that—that you should just ventilate your anger, just let it all get out? that it's good for you? That's a lie, my dear friend. The Bible says you're not to do that. And, in a new book, *Anger: The Misunderstood Emotion*, Carol Tavris writes this: "The psychological rationale for ventilating anger does not stand up under experimental scrutiny. The weight of the evidence indicates precisely the opposite: expressing anger makes you more angry, solidifies an angry attitude, and establishes a hostile habit." That's the reason the Bible says, "*A soft answer turneth away wrath*" (Proverbs 15:1)—not ventilating your anger.

6. Malice

But see, look, here it is: First of all, there's bitterness. That bitterness turns to wrath. That wrath turns to anger. That anger turns to clamor. That clamor turns to evil speaking. And then, what's the last one? Malice. (Ephesians 4:31) Do you know what malice is? Malice is doing something evil and hurtful. Malice is what leads to murder. That's the reason why I spoke of the malice of murder. After you've said those wicked and vile things that begin to come out of your mouth, then you have a desire to reach out and strike somebody, to hurt somebody, to hit somebody, to harm somebody. And, that's what's behind this thing of murder. It all starts in the heart. It all starts with a root of bitterness.

And, so many people are carrying around this load of bitterness, and there are people who are sitting in this congregation this morning who have in your heart the seeds of murder—your bitterness. Now, you may never kill anybody. It's far better to carry the seed in your heart than to do it. Don't just say, "Well, I'm already guilty before God so I might as well kill somebody." No, that's not the thing. It's not what it does to them we are talking about; it's what it does to you, primarily, right now. You see, listen—listen, my dear friend. Jesus is dealing with Pharisees, and He only takes one illustration. We're going to take many more. You may say, "Well, I don't have that problem, Pastor Rogers." Well, come next Sunday. We'll find yours. Jesus has six illustrations right here. But, what Jesus is saying here is that it is what is on the inside, but not what is on the outside, that makes men the sinners that they are.

III. The Requirement for Righteousness

So, we see the malice of murder. We see the acid of anger. Now, we can see the requirement for righteousness. Jesus said—listen—*"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20) That is, you cannot behave your way into heaven.

‡ Do you know what's wrong with self-righteousness? Self-righteousness is like trying to fill a bottomless cup. You see, suppose you had a bottomless cup and you start trying to fill it. You'll never fill it; it has no bottom. Trying to fill yourself with yourself adds nothing to yourself because nothing plus nothing equals nothing.‡

You can never—you can never—have righteousness, never be righteous, never be right with God—never, never, never—until you have the righteousness which is from above.

Now, remember what Paul said in Romans 10, verse 3, concerning his people: *"They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."*

(Romans 10:3) Self-righteousness in God's sight is as filthy rags. The Pharisees needed to see this. They didn't understand it. They did not understand it.

How righteous are you? Let me tell you what real righteousness is.

A. Imputed Righteousness

Now, listen to me. Real righteousness—God's righteousness—is, first of all, imputed righteousness—imputed righteousness. Because Jesus died, because Jesus paid your sin debt, God just imputes righteousness to you. God puts righteousness on your account. God says, "Adrian is righteous"—not because of anything I've done; I mean, nothing I have done. It is because Jesus suffered, bled, and died, and paid for my sins on the cross. And, God imputes righteousness to me.

B. Implanted Righteousness

Now, wait a minute. Not only is it imputed righteousness; it is implanted righteousness. Then He gives me a new nature; and then, I do what I do because I am what I am. And, I have been made new and clean and pure on the inside. And, God has worked a miracle in my heart, and God has worked a judicial miracle and a spiritual miracle. Imputed righteousness—a judicial miracle. He says, "Put righteousness on his account. Forget all of his sins; they are blotted out. He is righteous as my Son is righteous." And then, implanted righteousness—He puts His righteousness into me, and then the love of God begins to come out of me. And, it is no longer "*I, but Christ [that] liveth in me.*" (Galatians 2:20)

Conclusion

¶ Let me just tell you this story. A man dreamed, so I'm told, of the gates of heaven, and there were people who were trying to get into heaven. Someone knocked at the gate of heaven, and a voice from within said, "Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?" And, the man at the pearly gates said, "I am a righteous man, a moral man." And, He said, "What is the password into heaven?" He said, "Honesty." And, the voice from within said, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." Another knocked at the gate of heaven, and the voice within said, "Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password into heaven?" And, the man at the gate said, "I am a religious man." And, He said, "And, what is the password into heaven?" And, he said, "Ritual and religion." And, the voice within said, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." Another knocked at the pearly gate, and the voice within said, "Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?" And, this man said, "I am a humanitarian." He said, "What is the password into heaven?" He said, "Love, charity." And, the voice within said, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you." At last there came one other, and he knocked at

the gate. And, the voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” This man said, “In my hand no price I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling.” And, the voice within said, “Open wide the gate, and let him in, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”†

That’s what our Lord meant when He said to the moralists, to the religionists, and to the humanitarians, “*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” (Matthew 5:20) Our Lord is not against these other things. He’s not against religion—if it’s His religion. He’s not against morality. He’s not against love. He’s not against the keeping of the commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not kill.*” (Exodus 20:13) He’s very much for it. But, what God is saying, my dear friend, is *the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart*. And, the only answer to that is the new birth, the righteousness of God that is imputed and implanted when we are saved.†