

## (Mark 7:21-23) 12 Evil Things – Part 3: Murder

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### **Introduction**

Just how dark IS the human heart? Here's Jesus' answer— **Mark 7:21–23 (ESV)**

“<sup>21</sup> For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup> coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

The human heart is so dark that it can produce murder. Murder! Murder is a term applied by the Bible to an act by one or more humans, against one or more other humans, wherein there is the intentional cessation of human life.

Murder is an ancient sin; and despite what we may have been taught or told by psychology or sociology, it originates in, and emanates from, the human heart.

The propensity of one human to kill another, on purpose, for unjustified reasons, is pretty clear. Like only 9 other sins, it makes the list called the 10 commandments.

### **Thou shalt not murder. – Exodus 20:13 (ESV)**

Though we will not explore them in detail today, there are 2 types of killing that are not necessarily covered by this commandment—just warfare and capital punishment. Just warfare and capital punishment are not only permitted but also prescribed in the same books of the Bible that proclaim murder as being a sin.

So we are focusing on the act of an individual or individuals that intentionally, violently, and maliciously causes another person or persons to die.

Note that besides war and capital punishment the Bible also distinguishes between murder and manslaughter.

### **[SEE NUMBERS 35:16-33]**

<sup>16</sup> “But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. <sup>17</sup> And if he struck him down with a stone tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. <sup>18</sup> Or if he struck him down with a wooden tool that could cause death, and he died, he is

a murderer. The murderer shall be put to death. <sup>19</sup> The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death. <sup>20</sup> And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died, <sup>21</sup> or in enmity struck him down with his hand, so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him. <sup>22</sup> “But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait <sup>23</sup> or used a stone that could cause death, and without seeing him dropped it on him, so that he died, though he was not his enemy and did not seek his harm, <sup>24</sup> then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these rules. <sup>25</sup> And the congregation shall rescue the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he had fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil. <sup>26</sup> But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the boundaries of his city of refuge to which he fled, <sup>27</sup> and the avenger of blood finds him outside the boundaries of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood. <sup>28</sup> For he must remain in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest, but after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession. <sup>29</sup> And these things shall be for a statute and rule for you throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. <sup>30</sup> “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. <sup>31</sup> Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death. <sup>32</sup> And you shall accept no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the high priest. <sup>33</sup> You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.”

When you read the very detailed prescription regarding murder and manslaughter in the Biblical text above, you get the idea that human life is of great value and should be protected.

But the reality is that many humans don't value the lives of other people.

The US homicide rate, which has declined substantially since 1992 from a rate per 100,000 persons of 9.8 to 4.5 in 2013, is still among the highest in the industrialized world. There were 13,716 homicides in the United States in 2013, including non-negligent manslaughter.<sup>[42]</sup> (666,160 [murders](#) from 1960 to 1996).<sup>[43]</sup> In 2004, there were 5.5 homicides for every 100,000 persons, roughly three times as high as Canada (1.9) and six times as high as Germany (0.9).<sup>[44][45]</sup> A closer look at The National Archive of Criminal Justice Data indicates that per-capita homicide rates over the last 30 plus years on average, of major cities, New Orleans' average annual per capita homicide rate of 52 murders per 100,000 people overall (1980–2012) is the highest of U.S. cities with average annual homicide totals that were among the top 10 highest during the same period.

The murder rate in the United States is roughly 10,000 per year—more than one per hour every day in the year. In all the wars in the nations' history, 530,000 United States combatants have been killed; but since 1900, deaths from guns alone in the U. S. have totalled more than 800,000.<sup>1</sup>

Countess Erszebet Bathory (1560–1614) of Hungary was accused in court of killing 610 young girls. That is the most persons anyone has ever been officially charged with murdering. The names of the victims were on a list in her own handwriting.

—*Bible Expositor*<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1953 the nation was horrified by the story of an 18-year-old boy murdering five people. Fred McManus was considered a nice boy in his home town of Valley Stream, New York. Tall, handsome, polite, of a respected and well-to-do family, Fred could not be considered criminal material.

Nevertheless, on leave from the Marines he had joined after high school graduation, young Fred picked up a 16-year-old girl and started across country, determined to be married in Minnesota where they had been incorrectly informed that minors could be married. They thumbed a ride with a 19-year-old student and murdered him. They robbed a store, shooting in cold blood the owner and his wife. While robbing a restaurant in Spring Valley, Minnesota, Fred shot a waitress and the owner's wife.

When asked the reason for his crimes, he stated:

“I was in love and I needed the money.”

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 868.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 869.

But the reason he had revealed to his intended wife. After the first murder he told her:

“It doesn’t bother me if I don’t know the people. There is no such thing as conscience. It’s just a feeling of fear that people have.”

—Arthur Tonne<sup>3</sup>

### HOW DO WE PROCESS THE SAD REALITY OF MURDER?

*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

JEREMIAH 17:9<sup>4</sup>

The obvious pitfall for the average Christian today, when reading Mark 7:1-23 and considering such a sin as Murder, is the tendency to think, not only will I never murder someone, I couldn’t murder someone.

This is a pitfall for several reasons—

- 1) Such an attitude is incompatible with our theology. Our theology says that our sinfulness is related to both God’s character and God’s law.

Though we may never break God’s law in relation to murder, we regularly are murderers in comparison with God’s character because we hate people, pour out fury on people and slay people with our words.

In entering the extensive field of the definition of sin, a distinction arises at the outset between the state of heart which impels one to sin and the overt act of the sin itself. In the case of Adam who sinned without the promptings of a sin nature, it is evident that his act of disobedience was preceded and prepared by a consent of his will, and that, when he had thus determined his course, or was willing to disobey God, he had already sinned potentially. That attitude could be

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), 870–871.

<sup>4</sup> J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993).

defined as a *state* of sin. It is to be noted that, had he been hindered against his will from the overt act of disobedience, he would, nevertheless, have been condemnable on the ground of his intention and willingness.<sup>5</sup>

- 2) Such an attitude ignores the teaching of Jesus that our hearts are the source of such evils as murder. We have terrible capacities, which under the right circumstances can become realities with dreadful consequences. [But for the grace of God, there go I.]

In the case of Adam's posterity all of whom inherit the sin nature which unceasingly excites to sin, a constant state of sin exists which can be relieved only by the preventing power of the indwelling Spirit. Sin is therefore sometimes defined as a state of heart or mind. Much has been written on the subject of sin from a psychological approach, but such considerations are too often speculative and do not tend to develop the evil character of sin as it is set forth in the Bible. It may be admitted along with the speculative ideals that sin is an action of the will—either an overt omission or commission—but back of the will is the evil heart. Christ emphasized this when He said, "That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:20–23). The nature of fallen man is sinful whether it expresses its true character in overt acts or not.<sup>6</sup>

- 3) Perhaps John's message must be reiterated for us to understand God's perspective on our hearts and our actions.

<sup>11</sup> For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. <sup>12</sup> We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. <sup>13</sup> Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. <sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. <sup>15</sup> Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. <sup>16</sup> By this we know love, that he

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<sup>5</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 254.

<sup>6</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 254.

laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. <sup>17</sup> But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? <sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”  
**(1 John 3:11-18)**

We realize that our hearts are capable of a continuum of evil. We have to censure ourselves and prayerfully seek the Holy Spirit's help with our damning words, hateful glares, and vengeful thoughts. God doesn't take lightly the desires we have to see others diminished. To hate someone is to be a murderer in God's eyes.

Commit yourself today to a biblical view of what constitutes murder.

The Bible makes the dichotomy clear—

Satan comes to kill and destroy.

Jesus comes that we might have life.

You can only align yourself with one path or the other.

Hating your brother is murder and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Though it has become a cliché I say, “Choose life!”

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