

***Proverbs 6:16-17 These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: (17) A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,***

We live in a violent world. In fact, most newscasts are on the topics of violent crime. Jesus said that Satan ***“was a murderer from the beginning”*** (***John 8:44***) and it did not take him long to have success in tempting man to shed blood. Little did Eve realize, as she submitted to the serpent’s lies, that her firstborn son would become a murderer and the heart-rending sorrow that she would have as she placed a murdered son in the earth. Since then, rivers of blood have flowed on God's earth as one wonders how many murders have committed out of malice, spite, envy, and greed?

Let’s begin by considering an overview of murder from a Biblical perspective. The word ***“murder”*** [Gk phoneuo] in various forms is found twelve times in the Bible while the word ***“kill”*** occurs about 125 times. Jesus said, ***“Thou shalt do no murder...”*** (***Matthew 19:18***), echoing what had been given as law to Moses and Israel back in Exodus 20:13. When God gave the Ten Commands to be the foundation of human responsibility, He included these four powerful words among them: ***“Thou shalt not kill.”*** Yet the Bible is filled with killing. The history of mankind is a history of bloodshed.

Murder is wrong because life is sacred. God explains to Noah and his family as they exited the ark that for the first time man will be allowed to kill animals and eat them for food, but then He says, ***“Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”*** (***Genesis 9:6***). Since man is made in the image of God, then the taking of a man's life is the destruction of the most precious and the most holy thing in the world. *Several years ago a woman was convicted of hiring a hit man" to murder the mother of her daughter's rival for a cheerleading position at school. She hoped the woman's daughter would be too upset to compete.*

Now most of us probably don't fear ever becoming murderers, but let’s not be too quick in our assessment because you see, we don't have to physically end a life to harbor in the heart the attitudes that foster all of the killings that go on in

the world. Avoiding murder involves more than just not taking up a weapon and assaulting someone. *(1 John 3:14b-15) ... He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. {15} Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.* Here we are warned against the dangers of hate. If one is to avoid murder he must keep hate from his heart. The Lord classifies us with murderers if we are angry and hateful to others

So how do we **guard against hatred** and deal with grudges and hateful feelings? Since murder originates in the heart we must put our first line of defense at that position. Like the Pharisees, we might rather deal with externals than internals. We might say, *"Well, I've never shot or stabbed anyone. I've never put cyanide in anyone's food or clubbed anyone from behind with a brass candlestick."* But the Lord looks at the internal things. He deals with the roots, not just the fruits. As one man put it, *"This morning I woke up. I went into the bathroom to brush my teeth and an amazing thing happened. I took the tube of toothpaste, squeezed it, and do you know what came out? Toothpaste. I kid you not. It wasn't mashed potatoes. It wasn't Jello. It wasn't scented topical muscle rub. Just white, minty toothpaste."*

*God knows that when I put Him first in my life, the first thing that will come out of my life when I am put under pressure will be His love. When my life has been filled with the love, peace, longsuffering, patience, and kindness of God, then when I am squeezed by people, circumstances, challenges, troubles, and problems, the Lord knows that out of my life will come expressions of His love and His grace."* What we put in our minds comes out in our deeds (cf. Philippians 4:8).

**Let us control our anger.** *(Prov 14:17) He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.* We live in an angry world. Road rage, drive-by shootings, and angry public outbursts are the order of the day. If forced to wait in a line when they weren't expecting to, some people can grow fangs just standing there. What's with this store? What's with these people? Why can't they get out their checkbooks BEFORE the total is rung up?

How do I deal with this kind of restless, impatient anger? We need to think before we act. We could pay a counselor any amount of money, but we'll never find any advice better than: ***“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).*** If Cain had taken a walk in the orchard or sat by a stream for an hour instead of calling his brother into the field, how different his life likely would have been. Instead of being a marked man and an outcast for the rest of his life, he could have come home to a family each night.

Anger is a normal human emotion. The word *anger* in various forms is found 269 times in the Bible. Even Jesus was angry (Mark 3:5). God is angry *“every day.”* ***Psa 7:11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*** We as God’s people must learn to control our anger lest it lead us to sin, just as we must control the natural emotion of lust lest it lead us into adultery. Paul wrote, ***Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath (Ephesians 4:26).*** According to Jesus, murder begins with anger. ***“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: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:... (Matt.5:21).*** Unresolved anger draws Satan into our lives and to help us war against Satan’s attack, let us do two things.

**First, let us Learn to use a soft answer (Prov 15:1) *A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.*** **Secondly, let us Remove bad opportunities.** Solomon said, ***“Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go” (Proverbs 22:24).*** When Paul and Barnabas had a “sharp contention” between them, they parted ways for a time (Acts 15:39). If one has violent feelings toward someone, then he should take steps to avoid this person; or, if he must be in the proximity, remove anything that might be used to injure.

Now to our text and the phrase **“Hands That Shed Innocent Blood.”** The word “hands” in the Bible is often used to stand for a person's deeds. We still use this figure. We talk of someone having “sticky fingers.” If a ranch foreman is

asked, “*How many hands do you have working for you?*” he knows they mean, “How many workers do you have?”

Isaiah wrote, (*Isa 1:15*) *And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* Compare the hands of Jesus. They were placed on the heads of little children to bless them, they gave sight to the blind, and they touched the leper. His hands fed the hungry multitude, restored the severed ear of Malchus and provided the precious blood that cancels all our sin.

In describing the evil Isaiah wrote, *Isaiah 59:7 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths.*

*that shed...* The verb implies that one has actively injured another. He is not talking about accidents.

*innocent...* All murder is killing; but not all killing is murder; The Law of Moses distinguished at least four types of homicide.

First, there was **justifiable homicide**, or self-defense. If a thief was killed in the act of stealing, the one who smote him was not to be punished (Exodus 22:2-3; Matthew 24:43).

Second there was **accidental homicide**. One can kill accidentally and not be guilty. Jewish law made special provision for what might be called non-deliberate killing, killing which happened by accident. If two men were working together and one's axe head flew off the handle and killed his partner or one unintentionally caused a rock to fall which crushed his partner to death, no act of murder was involved (Numbers 35:22-28).

This person could flee to one of six cities of refuge and claim sanctuary until the facts of the case were known. The cities were so distributed that no one could ever be more than thirty miles from one. Entrance into one of these cities did offer protection from the avenging next of kin of the dead man *until* the circumstances of the killing had been investigated. If it was found that the killing had been deliberate and premeditated, then the murderer had to be killed. If it

was judged accidental, then he could live in that city and be free from the avenger of blood. If the killer ventured outside the city, the avenger might take his life. When the high priest died and was replaced, he could return home and not be assaulted by the dead person's family.

Third, there was **judicial homicide**. This phrase does not forbid a policeman's or soldier's killing to protect others, nor a magistrate's putting offenders to death. The Jews were forbidden to show pity to anyone who committed deliberate homicide (Deuteronomy 19:13). We make a mistake when we make no distinction between villain and victim and have as much compassion for the killer as for the innocent person whose life has been taken. Society is built on law. Law is the foundation and the cement which holds it together and any breach of it, or any defiance of it, must be punished.

Did this change in the New Testament? When Pilate asked Jesus, ***“Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?”*** Jesus did not say, *“You don't have the right to the death penalty.”* He acknowledged that right, but denied that He was guilty and thus subject to it. Jesus admitted that Pilate had authority, and reminded Pilate who gave him that authority (John 19:10-11). About a quarter century later, Paul was on trial before Festus (Acts 25:11). He, too, acknowledged the death penalty, but claimed innocence. About four years before the trial before Festus (A.D. 56), Paul had written about the functions of civil government to the Romans. Through him, God said one function of government included “bearing the sword” to “execute wrath” on evildoers: ***“For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Romans 13:4).*** Both testaments were written by the same God. He was not a vengeful God in the Old Testament who somehow changed to a loving God in the New Testament (cf Hebrews 13:8).

Fourth, there was **premeditated murder**. (Numbers 35:16-21). This is planning ahead of time, lying in wait, taking the

person off guard, and slaying him. It is also killing a person in the course of committing some other crime against him, such as trying to rob him. It includes all killing of malice and hatred. The bloodshed under consideration here is of those who did not deserve injury, punishment, or death. Saul was asked: ***“wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?” (1 Samuel 19:5).*** The word “blood” is found 447 times in the Bible. God told Moses: ***Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Genesis 9:6).*** The phrase “shed blood” is found fifteen times in Scripture (14 times in the Old Testament; once in the New Testament). The one time it is found in the New Testament, it is part of Paul's description of the universal sinfulness of man includes ***feet that are swift to shed blood” (Romans 3:15).***

While we are not murderers in the physical way, inside we may be guilty because of hatred, bitterness, or malice. If that is the case with you, then repent and get rid of those feelings.

Invitation