

Text: Exodus 20:13

Title: "You shall not kill"

Time: 6/6/2021 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: The culture of Satan's world is a culture of death. Satan is the "murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44), and Jesus spoke of those who wanted to kill Him as children of their "father the devil." Beginning with Cain's destruction of his brother Abel and ending with the latest of the 125,000 abortions worldwide that will take place today, human history is a record of sinful bloodshed. Numbers 35 tells us that this bloodshed pollutes the earth.

But death does not explain every aspect of our culture. There is something else at work here too, and I am reminded of the preciousness of this truth especially by the work of our first responders. We humans are the drug addict who kills himself with an overdose of deadly drugs, but we are also the firefighter who does everything he can to bring that murder victim back from the brink of death.

At our core, we know life is better than death. Although we often have to be reminded, we agree that unlike animals, we are not supposed to bite and devour and thereby consume one another (Gal. 5:15). We aspire to the claim that this is not us, that we are better than this. And this ability to know this and to aspire to life and not death this way is what makes the murder of human life truly sinful and justly deserving of capital punishment. The Lord explains the preciousness of human life this way: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. 9:6). This is a command given to God's image-bearers. We are fallen creatures, but

not animals. Unlike animals, we are made in the image of God.

So, it is to us, God's fallen image-bearers, who live in a world polluted by our bloodshed, that the Lord issues the Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." I want to answer three simple questions about the commandment this morning from Scripture: What does it mean to kill? Who are killers? And Who must be killed for all the killing?

I. What does it mean to kill in violation of the Sixth Commandment? (Num. 35:9-32).

Illustration: U.S. criminal law recognizes that not every killing of a human being is equally criminal. First degree murder is killing a human being with evil motive and premeditation. Second degree murder is like first degree, but without premeditation. Manslaughter is a charge reserved for accidental killings of a human being, and justifiable homicides are those killings that are self-defense.

Application: The law code of Israel's Old Testament theocracy was similar in this regard. Although killings of humans and animals are mentioned throughout the early pages of Scripture, Exod. 20:13 is the first usage of the word here translated kill. This form of the word (qal theme) is discussed extensively in Numbers 35, where the Lord commanded Israel to establish six cities of refuge for the adjudication of manslayers. That word manslayer is the participle of this word.

So, the first thing to understand about this Sixth Commandment is that it is forbidding the killing of humans, not animals. The Hebrews used a completely different verb for the killing of animals. In fact, the passage in Genesis 9 that ex-

plains that it is God's image in man that makes killing humans murder also explains that Noah and his family were now permitted to kill animals for food.

But more to the point of Numbers 35 and the usage of this word, God wanted His people to recognize different categories of killings. The chapter identifies one category of manslayer as including killers who acted on evil motive and premeditation. These were to be punished with capital punishment. It also identifies a category of manslayer as including killers who killed accidentally, with no evil motive or premeditation. These were to be punished by having to live in the city of refuge until the death of the high priest. The congregation was to adjudicate these cases, and more than one witness was always necessary before capital punishment was allowed.

Another important passage helping us to understand what it means to kill is Deut. 22:26, which addresses what to do with rapists. There the Lord commands this: "But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter." So, rape is a capital crime in violation of the Sixth Commandment, not because the rape victim died, but because the perpetrator had the evil motive and premeditation of a murderer. And so this command applies to other forms of violence that harm others, which are expressions of the same hatred and premeditation as murder.

Jesus highlights this last category of killing in His Sermon on the Mount, where He taught that we commit murder when we hate our neighbor. Forms of this hatred He mentioned are anger, cursing, division, and suing other people.

So, in summary, what does it mean to kill in violation of the Sixth Commandment? (1) It does not mean killing animals; (2) it does refer to the capital offense of killing someone or doing some other form of violence against someone with evil motives, primarily hatred, and premeditation; and (3) it does refer to a lesser offense of killing someone or doing them harm accidentally, without evil motive or premeditation. One footnote to that last category is that criminal neglect causing the death of someone can rise to the level of a capital offense (Exod. 21:28-31). Not everything called an accident is accidental.

II. Who are killers that violate the Sixth Commandment? (Matt. 15:16-20).

Illustration: I became the pastor of New Boston Baptist Church in August of 2007. In October of 2009, in the neighboring town just south of us, Mont Vernon, a 17-year-old and his friends, who called themselves the “Disciples of Destruction,” picked a random home for what news reports described as a “thrill killing.” The teens called it an initiation rite into their club. Sleeping in the home was a mother and her 11-year-old little girl. The leader of the group used a machete to kill the sleeping mother with 36 blows. The little girl barely survived unimaginably severe injuries as well. The brutality of the event was shocking.

I will never forget something that one of the town leaders in Mont Vernon said after the murder. She said something like, “This is not who we are; we are better than this.” We would certainly like to believe that about ourselves, wouldn’t we? Unfortunately, the Bible is clear that we are not better than this. The “Disciples of Destruction” are part of the group this leader referred to as “We.”

When we look in the mirror, we see the reason why we live in a world of murderous violence and mayhem. Jesus told us this about our hearts: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man" (Matt. 15:19-20a). So, if you have the kind of heart that can produce evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, and blasphemies against a holy God, you also have the kind of heart that can produce murder in our world as well.

The authors of the New Testament indicate that local church members like us are often guilty of murder. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15); "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jam. 4:1-2). The desires we have and the actions we commit that seek to bring harm to others are all violations of the Sixth Commandment. We are the killers, and that makes our last question pertinent indeed.

III. Who must be killed for all the killing? (Acts 3:12-26).

Application: We have already mentioned that violating the Sixth Commandment in the theocracy of Israel was a capital crime. Killers had to be killed for their killings. Numbers 35 explains why this form of justice was necessary in Israel: "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel."

The land was not to be polluted with bloodshed left unpunished, because the land was the dwelling place of the Lord, whom Peter calls the "Prince of Life."

Peter preaches about the way the Prince of Life was killed to turn guilty killers from the guilt of their killings. He tells this Jewish crowd that had cried out "Crucify Him!" that they denied their Messiah (v.14). He says they did so ignorantly (v. 17). Must we not see here Peter's humble remembrance of his own denial of the Lord, and the way he did so with full knowledge and not with ignorance?

For both this preacher and his Acts 3 audience, Jesus is the answer to the question, "Who must be killed for killers?" He is the Lamb, slain for sinners from the foundation of the world.

Illustration: I would like to share a poem about this I titled, "The Sixth Commandment."

"Thou shalt not kill!"
Was the command and the will
Of God, whose Lamb
Became the sacrificed ram.

Slain was He, from the foundation of the world.
Cruel it was, on Calv'ry's altar was He hurled.
By killers killed, but willingly so,
What killers did, they never did know.

Praying, "Father, forgive;
They know not what they do,"
He was killed, who once lived.
And yet, He lives anew.

This forgiveness brings now
Not command but a vow.
Guilty Killer, who sighs,
"Surely, thou shalt not die!"

"Look, live!" He calls, once lifted up.
Trust Him to save; He drank the cup
You, Killer, filled with wine of wrath.
Repent, believe; find heaven's path.

Conclusion: And so by God's grace, the command "Thou shalt not kill" becomes the promise "Thou shalt not die," for those who put their faith in the one who was killed for the killings of killers. Once again, this Sixth Commandment, which we have broken, points us to the Savior who never broke it, but nevertheless who also endured the penalty our transgressions deserve.

Do you see how your sin killed the Prince of Life? Do you see how He willingly died for you and rose again in victory? Do you see how He can give you everlasting life in this world of murderous death, in spite of the role you played in the killings? Will you deny again the Prince of Life? Will you not repent, believe, and find eternal life in Him?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching