

TEN: Free to Obey

A Christian Looks at the Ten Commandments

NO RATZACH!

Exodus 20:13

INTRODUCTION: Now in our study of the Ten Commandments from the perspective of a New Testament Christian, we come to the sixth commandment.

You may be surprised that the sixth commandment is the most difficult to understand, making it a commandment that is often misapplied and used to support erroneous doctrine and practice.

Let us stand and read.

Exodus 20:13 NKJV “You shall not murder.”

You may be wondering, “What is so hard about that to understand?”

And if that is what you are thinking, I have proven that you do not understand.

- For while the translation “You shall not murder” is the best translation of this command in Hebrew that the English language can offer,
- It is not a correct translation.
- The trouble is revealed when you look at some other translations like the old King James Version, which is usually a very literal word for word translation.
- Many of you know that **the KJV renders this command, “Thou shalt not kill.”**
- **Unfortunately, the King James translation in this case is worse than the New King James, while neither one is altogether accurate.**

So, what is making this so hard?

The problem is that the key word in the Hebrew command cannot be translated with a single English word.

The command in Hebrew says, “You shall not ratzach.”

Now folks, I am going to tell you that this is not a sermon for those who come to church to give a nod to God or punch a ticket for doing good during the week.

We are going to do some real digging here, and if you are not willing to sit up and pay attention, you are going to get the dust we stir up all over you.

But Christian brother and sister, if you will invest some real mental and spiritual energy with me for thirty minutes you are going to understand some things not many people, even Christians, understand. Like ...

- Why it is a misuse of the sixth commandment to say God forbids war.
- Why the sixth commandment cannot be used to say God is against capital punishment.

The problem is not that you have to be a genius to understand what “ratzach” means. You just have to be willing to put in a little work.

So, work with me, and we will dig it out of God’s Word.

Ratzach appears in 21 passages in the Old Testament in 47 verses.

Ratzach is used to mean

- **premeditated murder**
- **unpremeditated murder**
- **negligent homicide**

Ratzach is never used to mean

- **a soldier killing another soldier in battle**
- **killing as an act of self-defense**
- **an act of capital punishment**

Other Hebrew words that are similar to the English word “kill” are used for those acts.

Therefore, the best translation of the sixth commandment is “You shall not murder nor commit negligent homicide.”

Now that we better understand the meaning of the command, let’s ask the first question.

1) What does the sixth commandment reveal about God?

- **God values human life.**
 - **Saying that does not mean that animal life has no value with God, but clearly in the Scriptures, human life is of far greater value.**

- **God knows when a sparrow falls to the ground, but He does not forbid the trapping or hunting of sparrows or other animals.**
- **God so values human life that He restricts how it can be taken without the one taking life being guilty before Holy God.**
 - **Human life may be taken by God Himself.** Job cried out when God permitted Satan to kill his sons and daughter,

Job 1:21 NKJV "... The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD."
 - **Human life may be taken as an act of war without guilt on the part of the soldier.** God did not hold David guilty when he slayed Goliath as the Philistines were attacking the people of Israel.
 - **Human life may be taken in an act of capital punishment.** God Himself prescribed the death penalty for a number of crimes for the national life of Israel.
 - **Human life may be taken in an act of self-defense.**
 - **Human life shall not be taken in an act of murder.**
 - **Human life shall not be taken by negligent homicide.** Negligent homicide is when a person is killed because of the negligence of another.

Here is an example.

Exodus 21:28–29 NKJV 28 "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, then the ox shall surely be stoned, and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be acquitted.

29 But if the ox tended to thrust with its horn in times past, and it has been made known to his owner, and he has not kept it confined, so that it has killed a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death.

God so values human life that He requires us to be careful to protect it.

Here is another restriction God makes because He values human life.

- **Human life still in the womb shall not be taken.**

Exodus 21:22–25 NKJV 22 "If men fight, and **hurt a woman with child**, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.

23 But if **any harm follows**, then **you shall give life for life**,

24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

Some of you might say, "That is so Old Testament!" But who are you to critique God? Jesus said not the smallest part would pass away. Instead of criticizing God and His Word, learn about the character of the One and Only Most High God!

2) How does God want this portion of His character to show in our lives?

- **God desires for us to value human life as He does.**

I am not going to make any new friends with what I am about to tell you. I hope I do not lose any friends I already have. But my calling and my responsibility is not to increase my popularity at the expense of God's truth. We all need to get our thinking in line with God's thinking instead of trying to redefine what God thinks in accord with our latest whim.

- We ought not to put animal life on a par with human life.
- We should be kind and not mean to animals.
- It is fine to love our pets or even animals in general. I had pets growing up, and I loved them.
- It is not fine to consider an animal's life equal or greater than human life.
- That is the error of the popular animal rights movement.

PETA founder Ingrid Newkirk has said, "When it comes to pain, love, joy, loneliness, and fear, a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy."

Contrast this with the words of Jesus,

Matthew 10:31 NKJV Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

God desires for us to value human life as He does.

- **So God would have us be most careful that we**
 - **Do not commit murder.**
 - **Do not commit suicide.**
 - **Suicide is the murder of oneself.**
 - ❖ Listen my friend, if you are having any thoughts about harming yourself, you need to know

- ❖ God values your life! God loves you!
- ❖ You may not love yourself or value the life you are living, but God created you, and He loves you.
- ❖ There may be others that do not value your life or love you, but don't you believe for a second that everybody is like that.
- ❖ God's people value life. We in this place value your life and in the name of Jesus, we love you; and we would try to help you.
- ❖ If you are thinking about harming yourself, you talk to one of our pastors at the end of the service today.

God says not to commit murder against others or against ourselves, and He says,

- **Do not commit negligent homicide.**

- Do you know the way that most of us are likely to commit negligent homicide?
- By the way we drive! Folks sometime, we are the people to whom others are saying, "God bless you," with fire in their eyes.

If you don't get that, ask someone around you that was here two weeks ago when I told them how the Lord convicted me to say "God bless you" to certain people.

- When we speed, we are teetering on the edge of negligent homicide, of taking a life that God created and values.
- When we text and drive, we are endangering our life and the lives of all around us. 1 out of every 4 accidents today are caused by texting while driving.

To let our lives reflect the way God values life, we must be careful not to murder, commit suicide, commit negligent homicide, and

- **Do not kill or hurt preborn babies.**

- Folks, God is pro-life. God values human life from the moment of conception all the way to life eternal forever with Him in glory for those who trust Him.
- God is not anti-women or anti-women's rights. It is just that neither man nor woman has the right to murder another human being whether the person is still in the womb or not.

- Those who live in countries who have the privilege and responsibilities of choosing our leaders bear the burden of choosing leaders who promise to value and protect life.
- Not every German shared the guilt of Hitler for the millions of Jews murdered in the Holocaust. But those who supported Hitler share that guilt.
- And those who support pro-abortion candidates for political office here in the United States share the guilt for killing more than three times the number of people murdered in the Holocaust!

3) What does the New Testament say that helps us understand this commandment better or how to live it out day to day?

Once again the New Testament jumps to the heart issues that would make us murder or cause us to live negligently or to take the life of a preborn child.

- **Jesus warned us against selfish anger.**

Matthew 5:21–22 NKJV 21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. ...

- **John warned us that harboring hate for someone was equivalent to murder.**

1 John 3:15 NKJV Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

- **Jesus told us how to overcome hate in our hearts.**

Matthew 5:43–45 NKJV 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; ...

Instead of hating our enemies, we should

- **Love them**
- **Bless them**
- **Do good to them**
- **Pray for them**

- **Paul warns us that an evil heart comes from being self-centered and selfish.**

Philippians 2:3–4 NKJV Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

- Why do we dislike people and sometimes let it grow to hate?
- Because in some way, they oppose things that are in our self-interest. What they say and do is contrary to what we say and do.
- The Holy Spirit through Paul said that the cure for not developing enemies is to esteem them as better than ourselves and look out for their interests as much or more than our own.

CONCLUSION: What the Spirit tells us to do to properly deal with anger, to not have hatred by dealing with our heart over selfish ambition and with our own self-interests is tough stuff. This is not easy for any of us, but all of us need to do it.

I only have one man in the world that I would call my enemy. And I have been laboring to practice all these things I have just pointed out the New Testament tells us about dealing with the heart issues of anger, self-interest, and hate.

Now I never got to the point that I wanted to kill this man. But at times I might have been at the point that if he had died, I would not have grieved.

But I have been applying these New Testament principles, and I tell you they work. They haven't changed him, but they are changing me. I do not hate him. I pray for him. I seek opportunity to do something good for him. I ask God to bless him. I am growing in love for him.

Doing what God says to do is not easy, but it works.

God help us to get down to the heart issues of valuing life and people like You do. Jesus help us to drop our self-interests and be concerned for the interests of others as You did when You went to the cross.