



[Matthew 5:21-22](#)

(21) You have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, 'You shall not commit murder; but whoever commits murder shall be subject to judgment.' (22) But I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be subject to judgment. Now *you have heard it said*, 'Whoever shall say to his brother, "Raca," shall be subject to *the judgment* of the council.' But *I say to you*, whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be subject to the fire of Gehenna.

A Faithful Version

Matthew 5:21-22 advises each individual to make efforts to cover his responsibility to ensure that his thoughts, words, and conduct do not lead to his needing the court's services. Indeed, [Jesus'](#) approach, if done perfectly, will ensure that he does not [sin](#) in any manner!

Our Savior's remedy for combating crime shifts matters from retaliation by civil authorities to stopping it at its source. When each person is responsible for dealing with anger and hatred internally, keeping them from ever manifesting themselves as external acts, it also eliminates the fear of being caught by police and punished by the courts.

The central thought Jesus expresses is that such thoughts are tantamount to [murder](#) in God's eyes. If a person never had an evil thought, no murder would exist. [I John 3:15](#) reveals how important Christians should consider controlling our thoughts to be: "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has [eternal life](#) abiding in him." The hostility present in a wrongly motivated person's mind already contains the ingredients necessary to persuade him to kill another who, he feels, stands in the way of his progress. The hostility connects directly to the act of murder because they are actually one process.

At first, [Matthew 5:38-39](#) appears to say that one should simply offer himself as a sacrificial lamb: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right

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cheek, turn the other to him also." However, Jesus does not rule out self-defense in a life-threatening situation, as His illustrations in the wider context of Matthew 5 show.

Taken together, His illustrations reveal that He is not considering anything more than rather minor, but irritating and perhaps considerably inconvenient, interruptions in our daily routines. The general thought is that we must not set ourselves up as the angry enemy of the person perpetrating evil against us. He advises us to remove the bitterness in our own hearts by doing good rather than retaliating and doing evil. It is a warning against letting our thoughts build a hatred-based case against others.

This involves a great deal of humility and [patience](#) on our part, but it often diffuses what could build to murderous thoughts in our mind. We have all probably felt like not working at one time or another, but because we had to do it, we set our will, threw ourselves into accomplishing the work, and before we knew it, we were likely enjoying the accomplishment! This is a simple illustration, but the same general process is involved in Jesus' counsel.

Jesus followed His own teaching, as [Luke 23:34](#) illustrates: "Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' Then they divided His garments and cast lots." Earlier He had said, "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" ([Matthew 26:53](#)). Yet, retaliation was not on His mind. Fulfilling His work from His Father and in behalf of mankind overrode His personal feelings, even in this severe dilemma.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:
[The Sixth Commandment](#)

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