



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study: **THE NECESSITY OF RECONCILIATION BEFORE ACCEPTABLE SERVICE**
Matthew 5:23-26

“Therefore ...” The word, **“therefore”**, links us with the preceding verses before verse 23. Our Lord had revealed the mind of God and the verdict of heaven on anger in our relationship. The religious leaders of that time had not considered the evil and danger of anger. Neither did they think of other sins that anger produces - hatred, malice, revenge, retaliation, strife, contention, injustice, violence, slander, backbiting, provocation, murmuring, division, conspiracy, mischief, cruelty, oppression, obstinacy, covenant breaking, strained relationships, self-destruction. Anger is an evil root in one’s heart that produces evil fruits in one’s life.

Anger affects our relationship with our neighbours negatively. With such negative effects on our relationship, a wife or a husband, a brother or a sister, an employer or an employee, a relative or a neighbour may justly have an **“aught”** against us. Reconciliation, the mending of our relationship, restoration of normal fellowship becomes necessary before God can accept our gift, service or worship. Our Lord who knows the meaning and requirements of God’s law more than all religious teachers in all generations declares this truth. Angry relationship with man hinders intimate relationship with God.

REALIZATION AT THE ALTAR OF WORSHIP

Matthew 5:23; Genesis 41:9; 42:21-23; 1 Samuel 24:5; Esther 2:1; Job 34:32; Ezekiel 36:31; Matthew 26:75; Ezekiel 16:61-63.

“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, ...” The Pharisees were only committed to external acts of worship, they were not concerned about the state of their hearts. The internal state of mind and attitude towards their fellowmen were not considered as essential to their worship of God. While their hearts burned with the fire of anger and hatred, they continued with their external acts of worship. While they were under the heavy burden of judgement and condemnation for contempt and conspiracy against Christ, they continued with their external acts of worship. Their worship was unacceptable. They had not learnt that **“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth”** (John 4:24). If anyone worships God with zeal and great commitment, yet with anger, hatred and malice in the heart, our Lord has declared his worship to be worthless and his religion vain. It is more desirable to have the heart right with God and man than to perform mere outward acts of worship. If, therefore, a man has gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, and should remember that anyone had anything against him, it was his duty to leave his offering there and go and be reconciled.

RECONCILIATION BEFORE ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

Matthew 5:24; Leviticus 6:1-7; Ecclesiastes 3:15; Luke 19:8-10; Acts 24:16; Luke 17:3,4; Matthew 18:15-17,21,22; 1 Corinthians 6:1-10; James 3:13-18; 5:16.

“First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” The word, **“first”**, emphasises the priority and necessity of reconciliation with offended brothers, sisters or neighbours before offering our gifts to God in worship or service. Consider the word, **“first”** in Matthew 6:33; 7:5; 17:10,11; 23:26. While the unresolved matters remained, our offering, sacrifice, worship or service cannot be acceptable. The gift we bring to God may appear great and very significant while the offended brother appears small and insignificant, yet restitution and reconciliation are necessary. The situation may appear small and insignificant, yet restitution and reconciliation are necessary. The situation or the **“aught”** may be known only between the offended and the offender, yet reconciliation will be necessary and it is not to be delayed. The fault or blame may be on both sides, yet the one who remembers that his brother has **“aught”** against him is not excusable. **“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”** (1 Samuel 15:22). To continue offering our gifts and labouring in the service of the Lord without reconciling with our brother, without restoring Christian fellowship will result to giving **“the sacrifice of fools”** (Ecclesiastes 5:1). Such sacrifice or service is unacceptable to God. Acceptable worship or service is always offered from hearts **“void of offence toward God, and toward men”** (Acts 24:16).

REACTION TOWARDS ADVERSARIES IN THE WORLD

Matthew 5:25,26; Romans 12:17-21; 14:17-19; Mark 9:50; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 Corinthians 16:9; Philippians 1:27,28; Luke 21:12-15.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly.” We ought to carefully restore and preserve christian love and fellowship. If at any time there is strained relationship, we must seek peace with urgency. **“As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”** Take the initiative to have reconciliation, by confessing your fault, humbling yourself before your brother, asking for his pardon and making restitution for wrong done in word or deed. Reconcile with the offended brother and meekly endure being cheated rather than going to the law court to settle differences.

This quick agreement with the adversary does not imply yielding or submitting our will or soul to the **“adversary the devil.”** No. As for him, resist him until he flees from you (James 4:7). Neither should we compromise the faith with the adversaries who are persecutors. Christ, our perfect Example did not compromise or agree with such adversaries or opposers of the gospel. He silenced them. **“And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him”** (Luke 13:17).

If you are blessed by these bible study outlines, we' d like to hear from you.
You can email the pastor@dclm-liverpool.org.uk with your comments