When most people think about sin, they think of outward actions things others can see. In Matthew 5:21–22, Jesus challenges that shallow understanding by revealing something deeper and far more serious: sin begins in the heart, and our words are often the evidence. Just as murder is condemned in the Law, Jesus teaches that hatred, anger, and contempt expressed through speech carry spiritual consequences as well.

Jesus reminds the listeners of the Old Testament commandment: *“You shall not murder.”* But then He goes further saying that anyone who harbors unjust anger, speaks insults, or condemns others with their words is already guilty before God. This aligns with 1 John 3:15, which teaches that hatred is the seed of murder. In other words, what begins internally eventually manifests externally if not addressed.

Jesus identifies three escalating attitudes. The first is anger a heart emotion that can quickly become bitterness, resentment, or revenge if not surrendered to God. Scripture warns us to put away anger and malice because they poison the heart and damage relationships (Ephesians 4:31). If left unchecked, anger

leads to the second level: harmful, insulting speech such as calling someone “Raca” words meant to demean or belittle. James 3:9–10 reminds us that we cannot praise God with the same mouth we use to tear people down. The third level is the most dangerous speech that condemns a person’s worth or value. When Jesus warns against calling someone a “fool,” He is confronting the spirit that writes people off as worthless or beyond redemption. Such speech reflects a heart that has assumed God’s place as judge.

At the center of all this lies a key truth: the heart is the real issue. Our words are not random; they reveal what lives inside us (Proverbs 4:23). God does not simply evaluate what we say or do He judges our motives, intentions, and inner spirit. That is why transformation cannot come from human effort alone. We need the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, who produces self-control, patience, kindness, and love within us (Galatians 5:22–23). Only when our hearts are renewed can our speech truly change.

God has always taken speech seriously. In Scripture, words bless, build, or destroy. They can heal or wound deeply. While today’s culture treats insults, sarcasm, and verbal attacks lightly, God does not. Jesus warns that careless and destructive words are

spiritually dangerous, and we will give account for them.

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Ultimately, Jesus' message is a call to examine the heart. Before harmful speech turns into broken relationships or violence, God wants to heal the root. We are invited to repent, release bitterness, forgive, and let the Spirit shape our character. As Paul reminds us, do not let anger linger because when it does, it opens a door for the enemy (Ephesians 4:26–27). Instead, let our prayer continually be: *"Create in me a pure heart, O God"* (Psalm 51:10).

Shalom.

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