

Why the Violence?



By
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A Christian!

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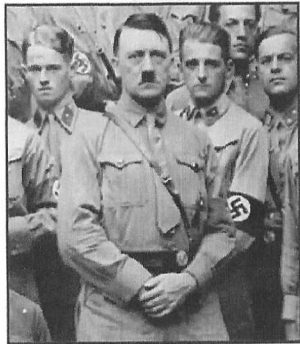
America is a violent nation. *Why does it seem that violence is on the increase?* I have no doubt that with each act of violence in our nation the so-called “experts” and “authorities” will come forth with answers . . . their opinions I might add. **But why is violence so prevalent?**

America does not have a monopoly on violence. Go nearly anywhere in our world and you will find violence to varying degrees. One of the major points of the Reformer **John Calvin’s** theology was:

“the total depravity of man!”

Was **John Calvin** on target in setting forth this belief or was he simply exacerbating the matter of sin?

Many would agree with Calvin in believing that men such as



Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, the Roman Emperor Nero, Charles Manson, Jeffrey Dahmer, etc. were evil to the core. **But what about the rest of us? Certainly we are not all evil, or are we?**

I am convinced that the root of the violent actions that we see taking place in our world, in our nation, and in our individual communities stems from the inner recesses of each human being. That inner recess is referred to in the Bible **“the heart.”** Note what the prophet wrote,

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9) KJV.

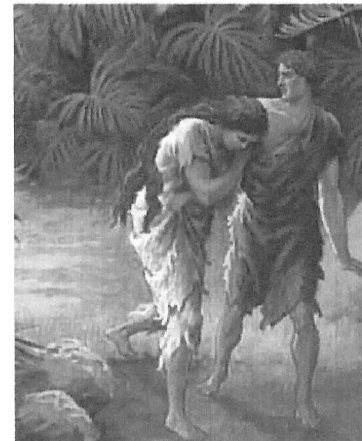
We learn from Scripture that the heart, mind and soul of every individual who has ever lived, other than our Lord himself, has been sinful. In fact the Bible declares,

“There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:22b-23) TNIV.

Later in the same letter the apostle Paul declared,

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death [physical and spiritual] through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) TNIV.

The above biblical passages are just two of the many places in Scripture where it is taught that **sin is universal.** All human beings have a nature that is sinful, hence all human beings are prone to sin. A small infant is not taught how to have a temper tantrum. Neither is a young child taught how to lie and deceive. **Sin is part and parcel** of each one of us. Sin entered the world when **our first**



parents, Adam and Eve, heeded the Deceiver’s voice. They believed his lie. Thus they sinned. As each of us ultimately has descended from these two, we too, have inherited what theologians often refer to as **“the sin nature.”** It is very natural for us to sin. We do not have to learn how to sin. Each one of us is a sinner by nature.

My main concern at this point is **the acts of violence** that have become common in our nation especially on the campuses of our schools. **Why?**

Isn’t it somewhat ironic that we as a nation have outlawed the posting of the simple biblical guidelines for living life from our schools and other public places?

Though no one could or can keep these guidelines, that we refer to as **“the Ten Commandments,”** to the letter of the law, yet **they do provide common sense** for living on this planet.

The second part of these commandments instructs human beings to **get along** with one another thusly:

- Honoring and respecting parents and elders.
- Doing no murder.
- Not committing adultery but being faithful to one's spouse only.
- Not stealing what belongs to others.
- Refraining from giving false testimony against others.
- Not wanting what belongs to others with such intensity that it destroys.

| GOD | MAN |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1: Do not worship any other gods | 5: Honour your father & mother |
| 2: Do not make any idols | 6: Do not murder |
| 3: Do not misuse the name of God | 7: Do not commit adultery |
| 4: Keep the Sabbath holy | 8: Do not steal |
| | 9: Do not lie |
| | 10: Do not covet |

The violence around us is not limited to the schools. *What about the gang activity in nearly every major city of the nation? the drive-by shootings? the home invasions? the mothers and fathers who kill their children? the children who kill their parents? the terrorists both domestic and from abroad?* And I could go on-and-on with a listing of acts that boggles one's mind. **Sin** is indeed with us and *"in"* each of us.

Violence has been with us from the dawn of civilization as we know it. Early in the Book of Genesis we are told that *Cain*, one of the sons of Adam and Eve, killed his brother *Abel*. Then in the 6th chapter of Genesis we read,

"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence." (6:11)

The biblical account records God's judgment upon the planet as a result of the sin condition in the days of Noah.

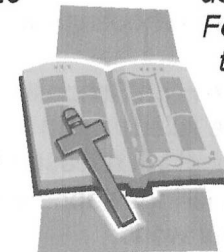
When Jesus was on earth he was asked, **"What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"** (Matthew 24:3b). In this chapter He told of numerous signs and events that would **increasingly** take place as his return drew nearer. We are two thousand years nearer to his return than when he made this declaration. *Does this mean that he will be*

returning in our lifetime? No one knows. All that we do know is that Jesus will one day return. In the 24th chapter of Matthew's Gospel one of those signs is,

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold." (Matthew 24:12)

Are not we living in a day when it appears that there is an increase in wickedness as never before? Wickedness, which is sin, abounds all about. Sin has been with us since the Fall in the Garden, however it seems to be steamrolling. Note the passage quoted above declares that *"the love of most will grow cold."* This too, it seems to me, is happening in our lifetime. In our own nation there was a day when nearly every child attended a Sunday School or catechism class each week. This is no longer true. Many churches no longer have a Sunday School program. **The vast majority** of our children and youth have had little or no exposure to any kind of "religion" or "church" let alone exposure to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Europe already is in the clutches of raw paganism and godless secularism. Our own nation is rapidly becoming "cold" to the things of God. Cults and false religious teachings abound. Unbelief fills many of our Protestant seminaries and churches. Many evangelical and charismatic churches put on extensive entertainment and smooth palatable preaching and programs to draw people rather than proclaiming **the simplicity** of the Gospel. It appears to me that what the apostle Paul declared in his letter to the company of believers in Corinth is especially true today. Note what he wrote:

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligent I will frustrate.' Where are the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through



the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks [Gentiles] look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks [believers], Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25) TNIV.

I am of the belief that **the only real solution** to the problems that we as a nation are experiencing will be a return to the preaching, teaching and living out of the Gospel by believers. We have had too much **“easy” believism** and too little teaching on **living as disciples** with Christ alone as Lord. The Gospel is that best news of all that Christ came to seek and to save those who would believe, by faith, in him as Savior and Lord. The apostle Paul wrote of the power of the Gospel thusly,

*“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation **to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.**” (Romans 1:16) TNIV.*

A quote from a sermon by Penny Harris aptly describes the condition of the human heart,

“All of us are capable of cruelty, hatred, brutality . . . all of us . . . all of us have that in us.”

I think of some of the violence that our country has experienced:

- the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers when nearly 3,000 died;
- the Virginia Tech shootings when 33 were gunned down;
- the Collumbine High School where 12 students and a teacher were killed;
- the Amish school in Lancaster Country, PA;
- the senseless killings happening every day in our cities and in our world;

- the ethnic, racial, religious and sexual hatred that consumes many people creating tension and numerous acts of violence.

Does all of this seem to be doom and gloom?

Yes, in some respects, yet as a disciple of Jesus Christ I **have good news**. This news is found spelled out in the written Word of God. The news is that the God of heaven and earth still rules. **God is still** on his throne in heaven. Coupled with the love of God is the fact that this God whom we Christians praise and worship is the Author and Bestower of Grace. I am one of those followers of the Prince of Peace who believes that it is through the grace of God that the sinful condition of the human heart can be healed.

At this point you may be wondering, *“Just what is grace?”* Probably the very simplest definition of grace is that,

“Grace is God’s favor, love and acceptance extended without any strings attached to it to any and to all who will personally accept it.”

Though our hearts are sinful and often we cannot understand some of our actions, yet God’s love, mercy, forgiveness and grace is ours by receiving it. In and through accepting God’s grace we are **reconciled** unto God,¹ **adopted** into God’s spiritual family,² and **given the gift** of eternal life.³

*“For it is by grace **you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.**” (Ephesians 2:8-9) TNIV.*

In writing to the church at Rome the apostle declared,

*“If you **declare** with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and **believe** in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved.** For it is with your heart that you **believe** and **are***

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

² Galatians 4.

³ Romans 5.

justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is LORD of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.'" (Rom. 10:9-13) TNIV.

God's grace is yours for the receiving! As you repent of your sin, open your heart and life to Christ and receive him as your Savior and Lord **you, too, will become** a child of God. When we receive Jesus Christ into our lives we are literally **adopted** into the family of God. **Salvation** is God's free gift to one who will simply receive it. No amount of our working or religious effort can obtain it. Remember, God's grace is extended to each person freely. Not one of us merits or deserves it but it's ours for **the believing and receiving** of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Once we are **"in"** Christ we are given a new nature. We become one of his disciples.

How about you? Have you personally believed in and received Jesus Christ into your heart and life? If you have not done so as yet, **why not** let Christ come and live in you.

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