

The Answer is God 2 Tim. 3:1-5

From the earliest days, the Bible speaks of violence in this world. In **Genesis chapter 4** Cain becomes jealous and then angry because God had regard for Abel's offering but not for the offering of Cain. In **verse 6**, God speaks with Cain, ***"The LORD said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.'"*** The Lord warned Cain about his anger, He told him that sin is crouching at the door, and that he must learn to rule over it. ***"If you do will, will you not be accepted?"*** But Cain did not control his anger and we see the result in **verse 8**, ***"Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him."***

What Cain did was evil. He planned to kill Abel out of his jealousy. In **Genesis 9:6** God said, ***"Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image."*** God has always considered taking the life of another as evil. In the Ten Commandments we read, ***"You shall not murder," (Ex. 20:13).*** Murder is and has always been wrong. **Revelation 21:8** says, ***"But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."***

The N.T. warns us not to follow Cain. **1 Jn. 3:12** says, ***"We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous."*** Cain first thought evil and then put his deadly plan into action. **We too must master our thoughts and not allow evil to overcome us.**

Jesus, in **Mt. 5:21-22** said, ***"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."*** The Lord condemns the evil in the heart, even if we don't act upon it. **Anger, hate, and vengeance is as evil as murder itself.** A Christian should not even entertain the idea of harm or slandering another person.

In **Mark 7:21-23** Jesus taught, ***"For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."*** Because our inner thoughts affect how we behave, we must be

careful to keep our hearts free from evil. We have to decide that we are going to live above ugliness and malice.

According to Jesus, murder begins when people lose respect for another person. Spitting in the face of another, looking with contempt upon another, or releasing one's anger are signs of a murderous spirit. *Jesus forces us to consider our thoughts and our words*, so that we don't allow our anger and hatred to overwhelm us. The Bible says in **Eph. 4:31-32**, ***“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*** We must learn to let go of evil thoughts and be kind to others, even if they are not kind to us.

Evil in the heart leads to the most terrible of sins. Even religious people, if they allow jealousy or hatred to build up in their hearts, can do unspeakable cruel things to others. The chief priests, scribes and Pharisees were behind the death of Jesus Christ – they chose Barabbas, a criminal, to be spared while they cried out for the blood of an innocent man, Jesus Christ. They didn't fool Pilate, in **Mark 15:10** we read, ***“For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.”***

Why were they envious? **First**, because Jesus could perform miracles; but they couldn't. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, some men ran and told the chief priests and Pharisees. John 11:47-48 says, ***“So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”***

Second, they were afraid of losing their livelihood at the temple. They figured it was better for Jesus to die than for them to lose their nation. Even today many people do horrible things out of jealousy and envy.

Another cause of hatred is something you might not expect; it is the truth. Some people don't want the truth told, if it exposes their sins. In **John 3:19-20** Jesus said, ***“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”*** Sinful people prefer darkness to cover up their sinful ways. They would hate for their sins to be exposed and will hate anyone who exposes them.

Do you remember why Herod had John the Baptist arrested and put into prison? It is because John the Baptist, the last O.T. prophet, told Herod it was unlawful for him to have his brother's wife – Herodias, as his wife (**Mt. 14:4**). Herod was grieved about the matter, but Herodias plotted to have John beheaded. An evil person who has hatred in his or her heart has no compassion. They will take vengeance into their own hands.

Selfish desire can lead people to commit murder. People who are greedy for power and gold will do anything to eliminate their competition. The Bible tells us in **2 Chron. 21:4**, ***“When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father and was established, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel.”*** Lust for power causes people to do horrible things, even to their own families. **James 3:16** says, ***“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.”***

Unrestrained sexual desire leads to evil. When David lustfully committed adultery with Bathsheba and got her pregnant, **it led to many other sins**. He tried to cover it up by getting Bathsheba’s husband Uriah to come home to her. When nothing else worked, David arranged for Uriah to die in battle. Nathan the prophet told David in **2 Samuel 12:9**, ***“Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites.”*** Remember, when we sin against others, we are also sinning against God Himself. If you love God, you’ll not allow selfishness to dominate your life.

The apostle Paul listed a number of fleshly sins in **Galatians 5**. *Each sin arose out of selfishness*. When people rebel against God and must have their own way, they lose sight of everyone else. They grow callous and don’t care who they hurt. Paul said in **Gal. 5:19-21**, ***“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*** Sinful desire has led many men and women into ruin. *Selfishness leads people away from God, and loving God leads people away from selfishness.* **The answer to evil is God’s love.**

Paul explains how loving God and loving people leads us away from evil. He said in **Romans 13:8-10**, ***“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”*** Just as filling your heart with anger and hate leads to sin, filling your heart with what is good and loving leads to righteousness. There’s a stark contrast between the person who loves God and his neighbor and the person who loves only himself.

Keeping God in our hearts isn’t trivial. It’s not a game. It is the most important thing that you can do. Don’t let anything come between you and the Lord. **Jude 21** *reminds us to keep ourselves in the love of God*. When God is our focus, we love what is right and good; and when we push God out, every evil thing comes into our lives. The Bible says

in **Romans 1:28-32**, *“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”*

Why are we so angry and violent? Why has evil become so prominent? It is because we have forgotten God; we no longer *“see fit to acknowledge God.”* We have stopped reading the Bible and worshiping at church, we have convinced ourselves that we are an accident of evolution rather than created beings with intelligent design. We have let sinful behavior politically correct God’s Holy Word, so what God calls sin is now morally acceptable. Without shame we have loved darkness and hated light, we have loved sin and blasphemed righteousness. We fill our media with every ungodly thought, every ungodly word, and every ungodly act. We glorify sin and mock righteousness. **When we choose to be godless, why should it surprise us that our society becomes wicked? When we reject the love of God, why should it surprise us that we become angry, hateful, and callous?**

When we shut God out of our hearts, we let the devil walk in. When God cannot enter our schools, Satan and his followers will. When we can’t read the Bible or pray in public any more, why should we be surprised that sin fills our cities? *We won’t let the Bible into our schools, but we sure want them in our prisons.* **Shouldn’t that teach us something?** We need God in our hearts and in our lives.

The solution to violence is this: *the love of Jesus must be in our hearts and His teaching in our lives.* When Peter cut the ear off the high priest’s servant, Jesus healed the man and said, *“Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Mt. 26:52).*

The Lord Jesus knew that people get angry and are violent. **He taught a better way.** He said in **Mt. 5:43-45**, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”* *If we are to be like God, we will love and even pray for our enemies.*

Jesus practiced what He preached. Remember how Jesus prayed, when they were crucifying Him? *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).* The grace of God can even forgive the violent. Peter told the Jews at Pentecost, these

Jews who were responsible for the death of Jesus – in Acts 2:36, ***“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”***

When they heard this, the Bible says ***“they were cut to the heart”*** over their sin and asked what they could to be forgiven. Peter responded in Acts 2:38, ***“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*** When we change our hearts and are baptized, we too can find God’s forgiveness. The closer we draw to God, the better our world will be.