

VIOLENCE

LESLIE VERNICK

(1 Chronicles 11:23)

Murders, muggings, rapes, riots—daily we are assaulted with reports of hideous crimes perpetrated upon innocent victims. But violence isn't new. As early as Genesis, the Bible tells us that the "earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11). The Old Testament reveals humankind's tendency to resort to violence as a means of gaining control, taking revenge, fighting back, or asserting authority. The reasons for violence in the Bible are the same reasons people use it today.

Violence is evil and God hates those who love it (Ps. 11:5). He warns believers not to envy people of violence or choose any of their behaviors (Prov. 3:31). A Christian's life is to be characterized by love, kindness, humility, gentleness, and forgiveness—not selfishness, anger and violence (Col. 3:1-17).

Christians are not immune to the devastating effects of violence or the temptation to use it, however. Many have been victims, not only perpetrated by strangers, but by the very people they live with and love. Behind the closed doors of many homes a secret kind of violence lurks, leaving tragic scars on its victims and causing lifelong consequences. People in such cases have suffered silently from relentless verbal cruelty, or physical and sometimes sexual abuse.

God cares deeply for the victims of violence. Throughout the psalms, David cries out for deliverance from the hand of the oppressor. God has a tender heart toward those who have been victimized by cruelty and violence (Ps. 5; 7; 10; 140). They can take comfort in the fact that a decisive judgment awaits those who oppress and hurt others (Rom. 12:19).

How are Christians to respond to violence when they face it? Should they resist when someone is violent toward them? The apostle Paul wrote that in his own life, he *did* fight back against violence. Instead of

fists, guns, knives, or ugly words however, he used the weapons of righteousness (2 Cor. 6:3-10). Believers are in a war—a war of good versus evil, but they are not to fight a war like the world does (2 Cor. 10:3, 4). They can win this war against evil by overcoming evil with good. *Overcome* is a fighting word. How do they win over evil with good? And what does this kind of good look like?

1. It is good to protect ourselves from violent people.

Proverbs 27:12 says "a prudent man foresees evil and hides himself." The angel of the Lord warned Joseph to take the baby Jesus and escape to Egypt because Herod was plotting to kill Him. The apostle Paul escaped from those who sought to stone him. Believers should do what they can to remove themselves from violent or potentially violent situations.

2. It is good to expose deeds done in darkness.

Ephesians 5:11 says that believers are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." A woman was sexually assaulted by a male nurse after her surgery. Eventually she mustered up the courage to tell someone and expose the violence done to her. Her speaking up brought about changes in the way patients were handled after surgery, and hospital employees were more

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rigorously screened. Evil attacked this woman, but she exposed it to keep it from harming others, and thus overcame it.

3. *It is good to speak the truth in love* (Eph. 4:25).

One woman's husband attacked her with violent, ugly words. She was afraid to confront him. Although her fears were legitimate, the only pathway to overcome this evil in her marriage was to speak the truth that his behavior was sinful, hurtful, and not a legitimate form of headship in the home. By speaking the truth from a loving heart, she demonstrated to her husband that she wasn't attacking him but, instead, was genuinely concerned for their relationship and his own spiritual well-being. She overcame evil with good.

4. *It is good to allow violent people to experience the consequences of their actions* (Prov. 19:19).

One of life's great teachers is consequences. When someone is sinned against by a violent person, it is not wrong to use the legal means of protection and justice that God provides. It is entirely legitimate to call the police, press charges, and separate oneself so that the violent person learns that this kind of behavior is unacceptable.

5. *It is good to be gracious to an enemy* (Rom. 12:20).

The last thing that people feel like doing is to be gracious to someone who has hurt them. Yet God speaks of kindness as a means of shaming an enemy. Joseph was kind and gracious to his brothers in spite of their cruelty toward him. Being kind and gracious doesn't mean to ignore the wrong or pretend it didn't happen. It means that the sin doesn't define the one sinned against. It doesn't shape them or make them into something evil. It was by Joseph's response to violence, injustice, deceit, and treachery that good won out.

He reminded his brothers, "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good" (Gen. 50:20).

God gives His people the weapons of righteousness to fight against evil and violence. These weapons may seem feeble to a spiritually untrained eye, but Paul says that they are "mighty in God" (2 Cor. 10:4). So let's "take up the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:13) so that we can stand firm and fight the fight against evil and violence in our homes and communities.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of violence include:

- Proverbs 13:2
- Isaiah 53:5
- Matthew 5:38-48
- Ephesians 4:26-32
- 1 Peter 4:15

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on violence at Psalm 11:5 on page 685. See also the personality profile of Naboth and Ahab on page 469.

PSALM 11

FAITH IN THE LORD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- 1 In the LORD I put my trust;
How can you say to my soul,
"Flee as a bird to your mountain"?
- 2 For look! The wicked bend their bow,
They make ready their arrow on the
string,
That they may shoot secretly at the
upright in heart.
- 3 If the foundations are destroyed,
What can the righteous do?
- 4 The LORD is in His holy temple,
The LORD's throne is in heaven;
His eyes behold,
His eyelids test the sons of men.
- 5 The LORD tests the righteous,
But the wicked and the one who loves
violence His soul hates.
- 6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals;
Fire and brimstone and a burning wind
Shall be the portion of their cup.
- 7 For the LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright.^a

PSALM 12

MAN'S TREACHERY AND GOD'S CONSTANCY

To the Chief Musician. On an eight-stringed harp.^a A Psalm of David.

- 1 Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases!
For the faithful disappear from among
the sons of men.
- 2 They speak idly everyone with his
neighbor;
With flattering lips and a double heart
they speak.
- 3 May the LORD cut off all flattering lips,
And the tongue that speaks proud
things,
- 4 Who have said,
"With our tongue we will prevail;
Our lips are our own;
Who is lord over us?"
- 5 "For the oppression of the poor, for the
sighing of the needy,
Now I will arise," says the LORD;
"I will set him in the safety for which he
yearns."

11:7 ^aOr: The upright beholds His countenance
12:title ^aHebrew sheminith

KEY PASSAGE



Violence

A VIOLENT END

(11:5)

Violence seems to be everywhere in society. From the time Cain committed the first murder (Gen. 4:8), humanity has been subject to violence. Indeed, God flooded the earth because it was filled with violence (Gen. 6:11-13). Violent people will often come to a violent end—as predicted in many proverbs (Prov. 4:16-19; 21:7) and by Jesus (Matt. 26:51). Murder, the ultimate form of violence, is forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:13). Jesus said that murder begins in the heart with angry and vengeful thoughts (Matt. 5:21, 22).

God's people are warned against allowing the natural emotion of anger to erupt into violence, for that harms others. Believers must also be discerning regarding television, movies, and video games, for these can desensitize a person to violence and sometimes even glorify it. With the filling of the Spirit, the believer will instead produce the fruit of love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23).

To Learn More: Turn to the article about violence on pages 526, 527. See also the personality profile of Naboth and Ahab on page 469.

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them. ¹²They
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rael, both bond and free. ²²I will make your
house like the house of Jeroboam the son of
Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son
of Ahijah, because of the provocation with
which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and
made Israel sin.' ²³And concerning Jezebel the
LORD also spoke, saying, 'The dogs shall eat
Jezebel by the wall^a of Jezreel.' ²⁴The dogs
shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in
the city, and the birds of the air shall eat who-
ever dies in the field."

²⁵But there was no one like Ahab who sold
himself to do wickedness in the sight of the
LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.
²⁶And he behaved very abominably in follow-
ing idols, according to all *that* the Amorites
had done, whom the LORD had cast out before
the children of Israel.

²⁷So it was, when Ahab heard those words,
that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on

his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and
went about mourning.

²⁸And the word of the LORD came to Elijah
the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹"See how Ahab has
humbled himself before *Me*? Because he has
humbled himself before *Me*, I will not bring
the calamity in his days. In the days of his son
I will bring the calamity on his house."

MICAH WARNS AHAB

22 Now three years passed without war
between Syria and Israel. ²Then it
came to pass, in the third year, that Jehosha-
phat the king of Judah went down to *visit* the
king of Israel.

21:23 ^aFollowing Masoretic Text and Septuagint;
some Hebrew manuscripts, Syriac, Targum, and
Vulgate read *plot of ground* (compare 2 Kings
9:36)

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Violence

NABOTH: IN THE PATH OF AN EVIL KING

(1 KINGS 21)

King Ahab ruled Samaria with an iron fist. He and his wife Jezebel have become
synonymous with evil. "There was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do

wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up" (1 Kin. 21:25).
These two made a truly gruesome twosome, as the story of Naboth's vineyard reveals.

Naboth was in the wrong place at the wrong time. His beautiful vineyard, a part of his
family inheritance, sat within yearning distance of the king's palace in Samaria. Ahab decided
that he wanted to own that lovely vineyard, and so he offered to buy it. But Naboth refused.
He did not want to sell off a piece of property that had been in his family for generations. So
he was well within his rights to refuse.

Ahab went home and pouted. Like a child who didn't get his way, Ahab lay on his bed
and refused to eat.

Enter Jezebel, the scheming wife who would stop at nothing to get *her* way. She heard
Ahab's complaint and took matters into her own hands. If Ahab wouldn't exercise his
authority as king to take the vineyard, then Jezebel would get it for him another way. She
devised a plan whereby Naboth would be both defamed and murdered. After the plan was
carried out, Ahab simply "went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth" (1 Kin.
21:16). He thought he had gotten away with it until the prophet Elijah knocked on his door
with some bad news.

History is filled with evil people who stopped at nothing to get their way, and violence
against godly people is a reality of life. Believers cannot assume that they will be exempt
from violence. God is still in charge, however. Jezebel had bloody hands, and her awful death
would be a fitting end to her horrible life (1 Kin. 21:23; 2 Kin. 9:30-37). Violence only breeds
violence. In the end, God will have the final say. He promises to one day destroy evil forever.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about violence on pages 526, 527. See also the key passage
note at Psalm 11:5 on page 685.

I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money."

³But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!"

⁴So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food. ⁵But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, "Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?"

⁶He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

⁷Then Jezebel his wife said to him, "You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

⁸And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. ⁹She wrote in the letters, saying,

Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; ¹⁰and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, "You have blasphemed God and the king." Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die.

¹¹So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as

Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. ¹²They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. ¹³And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!" Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. ¹⁴Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned and is dead."

¹⁵And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." ¹⁶So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

THE LORD CONDEMNS AHAB

¹⁷Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ¹⁸"Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. ¹⁹You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours."'

²⁰So Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?"

And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD: ²¹'Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Is-



Catch Up (21:1-16) It is difficult to read the tragic story of innocent Naboth being killed so a pouting king could have another vineyard. Naboth had been correct in refusing to sell the land, for it was a part of his family inheritance. But Ahab and Jezebel, the most evil twosome to reign in Israel, got their way. Jezebel schemed to have Naboth killed. Eventually, Jezebel died a horrible death, experiencing the violence she had used against others (2 Kin. 9:30-37). Violence has a way of catching up with people. **Topic: Violence**

rael, both by house like Nebat, and of Ahijah, which you made Israel's LORD also Jezebel by shall eat the city, and ever dies in

²⁵But there himself to LORD, because ²⁶And he be ing idols, had done, the children

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To Learn note at P

¹⁹Then that officer had answered the man of God, and said, "Now look, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?"

And he had said, "In fact, you shall see it with your eyes, but you shall not eat of it." ²⁰And so it happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gate, and he died.

THE KING RESTORES THE SHUNAMMITE'S LAND

8 Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." ²So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years.

³It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land. ⁴Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done." ⁵Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." ⁶And when the king asked the woman, she told him.

So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, "Restore all that *was* hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now."

DEATH OF BEN-HADAD

⁷Then Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad king of Syria was sick; and it was told

him, saying, "The man of God has come here." ⁸And the king said to Hazael, "Take a present in your hand, and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'" ⁹So Hazael went to meet him and took a present with him, of every good thing of Damascus, forty camel-loads; and he came and stood before him, and said, "Your son Ben-Hadad king of Syria has sent me to you, saying, 'Shall I recover from this disease?'"

¹⁰And Elisha said to him, "Go, say to him, 'You shall certainly recover.' However the LORD has shown me that he will really die." ¹¹Then he set his countenance in a stare until he was ashamed; and the man of God wept. ¹²And Hazael said, "Why is my lord weeping?"

He answered, "Because I know the evil that you will do to the children of Israel: Their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword; and you will dash their children, and rip open their women with child."

¹³So Hazael said, "But what is your servant—a dog, that he should do this gross thing?"

And Elisha answered, "The LORD has shown me that you *will become* king over Syria."

¹⁴Then he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, "What did Elisha say to you?" And he answered, "He told me you would surely recover." ¹⁵But it happened on the next day that he took a thick cloth and dipped it in water, and spread it over his face so that he died; and Hazael reigned in his place.

JEHORAM REIGNS IN JUDAH

¹⁶Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat *having been*



SOUL NOTE

The Wrong Path (8:15) Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, had sent Hazael to ask Elisha if he would recover from his disease. Elisha responded that Ben-Hadad would die and that Hazael would take his place as king. The prophet's words came true the next day, for God had revealed to Elijah the treachery in Hazael's heart. Instead of waiting for God's timing, Hazael assassinated the king. Taking matters into our own hands never accomplishes God's purposes. A life of violence brings its own path of destruction.

Topic: Violence

king of Judah that began to thirty-two years and he reigned; and he walked in just as the he daughter of A in the sight of not destroy Ju David, as He him and his s

²⁰In his day authority, and ²¹So Joram^a w with him. The the Edomites the captains fled to their revolt against And Libnah r

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²⁸Now he w to war against Gilead; and ²⁹Then King A recover from the inflicted on h against Hazael son of Jehora see Joram the he was sick.

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on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried

¹⁵Then God spoke to Noah, saying, ¹⁶“Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁷Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.” ¹⁸So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him. ¹⁹Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, and whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.

The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.

GENESIS 9:16

GOD’S COVENANT WITH CREATION

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

²² “While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease.”

9 So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply,

and fill the earth.^a ²And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. ³Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. ⁵Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man’s brother I will require the life of man.

⁶ “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Bring forth abundantly in the earth And multiply in it.”

⁸Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying: ⁹“And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants^a after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. ¹¹Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²And God said: “This is the sign of the

9:1 ^aCompare Genesis 1:28 **9:9** ^aLiterally seed

SOUL NOTE



A Violent Society (9:6) To find evidence of violence in society, just open a newspaper. Violence reflects the darkness of the human soul—the sinful nature. God dealt harshly with Noah’s generation because they were evil and the earth was “filled with violence” (6:11). People’s violence toward one another grieves God. After the Flood, God instructed succeeding generations to hold people accountable for their violent behavior and to punish them appropriately. It’s OK to desire that people receive just consequences for their violent behavior, but leave revenge to God. In the end, He will deal justly with all people. **Topic: Violence**

⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for you?"

⁸And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Go." So the maiden went and called the child's mother. ⁹Then Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this child away and nurse him for me, and I will give you your wages." So the woman took the child and nursed him. ¹⁰And the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. So she called his name Moses,^a saying, "Because I drew him out of the water."

MOSES FLEES TO MIDIAN

¹¹Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. ¹²So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. ¹³And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?"

¹⁴Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!" ¹⁵When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

¹⁶Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. ¹⁷Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

¹⁸When they came to Reuel their father, he

said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?"

¹⁹And they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock."

²⁰So he said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."

²¹Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses. ²²And she bore him a son. He called his name Gershom,^a for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."

²³Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage. ²⁴So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them.

MOSES AT THE BURNING BUSH

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ²And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. ³Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

⁴So when the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"

^{2:10} ^aLiterally Drawn Out ^{2:22} ^aLiterally Stranger There

SOUL NOTE



Leaving Justice to God (2:11, 12) Violence and murder have been around since Cain killed Abel. Moses' desire for justice was certainly correct, but his actions were not. Killing the Egyptian and hiding him in the sand went too far.

Physical force may have been necessary, but not murder. Although this act did not thwart God's plans for him, Moses still faced the consequences of his action. To keep from being killed himself, Moses had to run far from the life he had known.

Topic: Violence

And he said.

⁵Then He said, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." He said, "Who am I, O Lord, that I should see the face of my God?"

⁷And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen the oppression of my people in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, for I have come down to see the Egyptians mistreating my people, and to see the affliction of my people, for I have heard the cry of the Israelites because the Egyptians have oppressed them. I will now send My angel before you, and he will bring you out of Egypt."

¹¹But Moses said to the LORD, "I should go to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD has appeared to me in the burning bush, and He has said to me, "Bring you out of Egypt."'

¹²So He said to me,



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RETURN FROM THE WAR

¹²Then they brought the captives, the booty, and the spoil to Moses, to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from Jericho*. ¹³And Moses, Eleazar the priest, and all the leaders of the congregation, went to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴But Moses was angry with the officers of the army, *with the captains over thousands and captains over hundreds, who had come from the battle*.

¹⁵And Moses said to them: "Have you kept all the women alive? ¹⁶Look, these *women* caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD.

Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known a man intimately. ¹⁸But keep alive for yourselves all the young girls who have not known a man intimately. ¹⁹And as for you, remain outside the camp seven days; whoever has killed any person, and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰Purify every garment, everything made of leather, everything woven of goats' hair, and everything made of wood."

²¹Then Eleazar the priest said to the men of war who had gone to the battle, "This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD commanded Moses: ²²Only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, ²³everything that can endure fire, you shall put through the fire, and it shall be clean; and it shall be purified with the water of purification. But all that cannot endure fire you shall put through water. ²⁴And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day and be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp."

DIVISION OF THE PLUNDER

²⁵Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ²⁶"Count up the plunder that was taken—of man and beast—you and Eleazar the priest and the chief fathers of the congregation; ²⁷and divide the plunder into two parts, between those who took part in the war, who went out to battle, and all the congregation. ²⁸And levy a tribute for the LORD on the men of war who went out to battle: one of every five hundred of the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep; ²⁹take it from their half, and give it to Eleazar the priest as a heave offering to the LORD. ³⁰And from the children of Israel's half you shall take one of every fifty, drawn from the persons, the cattle, the donkeys, and the sheep, from all the livestock, and give them to the Levites who keep charge of the tabernacle of the LORD." ³¹So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

³²The booty remaining from the plunder, which the men of war had taken, was six hundred and seventy-five thousand sheep, ³³seventy-two thousand cattle, ³⁴sixty-one thousand donkeys, ³⁵and thirty-two thousand persons in all, of women who had not known a man intimately. ³⁶And the half, the portion for those who had gone out to war, was in number three hundred and thirty-seven thousand five hundred sheep; ³⁷and the LORD's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and seventy-five. ³⁸The cattle were thirty-six thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was seventy-two. ³⁹The donkeys were thirty thousand five hundred, of which the LORD's tribute was sixty-one. ⁴⁰The persons were sixteen thousand, of which the LORD's tribute was thirty-two persons. ⁴¹So Moses gave the tribute which was the LORD's heave offering to Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses.

SOUL NOTE



Kill Everybody? (31:17, 18) The command to kill everyone was part of God's plan to cleanse the land of evil influences and prepare it for the Israelites. The violence does not sit well with modern tastes, but it was God's judgment against these pagan nations. God knew that evil influences can affect a nation like yeast affects a batch of dough. Likewise, allowing a little bit of sin to stay in our lives will eventually have a profound effect. As the Israelites were called to eradicate the evil in the land, so believers should seek out and destroy sin in their lives. **Topic: Violence**

ABIMELECH'S CONSPIRACY

¹Then Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem, to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying, ²"Please speak in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: 'Which is better for you, that all seventy of the sons of Jerubbaal reign over you, or that one reign over you?' Remember that I *am* your own flesh and bone."

³And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem: and their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our brother." ⁴So they gave him seventy *shekels* of silver from the temple of Baal-Berith, with which Abimelech hired worthless and reckless men; and they followed him. ⁵Then he went to his father's house at Ophrah and killed his brothers, the seventy sons of Jerubbaal, on one stone. But Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left, because he hid himself. ⁶And all the men of Shechem gathered together, all of Beth Millo, and they went and made Abimelech king beside the terebinth tree at the pillar that *was* in Shechem.

THE PARABLE OF THE TREES

⁷Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and cried out. And he said to them:

"Listen to me, you men of Shechem,
That God may listen to you!

⁸ "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them.

And they said to the olive tree,
'Reign over us!'

⁹ But the olive tree said to them,
'Should I cease giving my oil,

With which they honor God and men,
And go to sway over trees?'

¹⁰ "Then the trees said to the fig tree,
'You come *and* reign over us!'

¹¹ But the fig tree said to them,
'Should I cease my sweetness and my good fruit,
And go to sway over trees?'

¹² "Then the trees said to the vine,
'You come *and* reign over us!'

¹³ But the vine said to them,
'Should I cease my new wine,
Which cheers *both* God and men,
And go to sway over trees?'

¹⁴ "Then all the trees said to the bramble,
'You come *and* reign over us!'

¹⁵ And the bramble said to the trees,
'If in truth you anoint me as king over you,
Then come *and* take shelter in my shade;

But if not, let fire come out of the
bramble

And devour the cedars of Lebanon!'

¹⁶"Now therefore, if you have acted in truth and sincerity in making Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him as he deserves—

¹⁷for my father fought for you, risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian;

¹⁸but you have risen up against my father's house this day, and killed his seventy sons on one stone, and made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother—¹⁹if then you have acted in truth and sincerity with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, *then*

SOUL NOTE



Self-Destruction (9:5) The tragic story of Abimelech pictures extreme violence used for selfish reasons. This illegitimate son of Gideon and a concubine (8:29–31) brought disaster upon the rest of Gideon's family. Conspiring to take his father's place of leadership in Israel, Abimelech "hired worthless and reckless men" (9:4) to follow him and help him kill all seventy of his half brothers. Violence and murder became his way of dealing with all threats to his power (9:22–49). In the end, however, his violent ways resulted in his own destruction (9:50–56). Violence doesn't really resolve anything, and ultimately leads to more violence. **Topic: Violence**

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JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN

⁵⁷And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

⁵⁸But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.

⁵⁹Now the chief priests, the elders,^a and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death,⁶⁰ but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none.^a But at last two false witnesses^b came forward⁶¹ and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

⁶²And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What *is it* these men testify against You?"⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"

⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "*It is as you said.* Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! ⁶⁶What do you think?"

They answered and said, "He is deserving of death."

⁶⁷Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands,⁶⁸ saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"

PETER DENIES JESUS, AND WEEPS BITTERLY

⁶⁹Now Peter sat outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came to him, saying, "You also were with Jesus of Galilee."

⁷⁰But he denied it before *them* all, saying, "I do not know what you are saying."

⁷¹And when he had gone out to the gateway, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This fellow also was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷²But again he denied with an oath, "I do not know the Man!"

⁷³And a little later those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you."

⁷⁴Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!"

Immediately a rooster crowed.⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

JESUS HANDED OVER TO PONTIUS PILATE

27 When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.² And when they had bound Him, they led Him away and delivered Him to Pontius^a Pilate the governor.

JUDAS HANGS HIMSELF

³Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see to it!"

⁵Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

⁶But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the

26:59 ^aNU-Text omits *the elders* 26:60 ^aNU-Text puts a comma after *but found none*, does not capitalize *Even*, and omits *they found none*. ^bNU-Text omits *false witnesses*. 27:2 ^aNU-Text omits *Pontius*.

SOUL NOTE



Be at Peace (26:51-54) When Jesus was arrested, Peter attempted to defend Him with his sword. Jesus rebuked Peter, saying, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword." Jesus' kingdom is to differ greatly from the kingdoms of the world. This King did not come to ride to victory through a bloody battlefield, but on a Cross where the only blood shed would be His own. Nowhere in the New Testament are believers commanded to promote Christianity by force. God will use force when He chooses; God's people, however, must be peacemakers (5:9). **Topic: Violence**

26:28 ^aNU-

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