

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Beloved, Let Us Overcome Evil with Good!

Philippians 4:2-9

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I. Introduction.

- A. The reality of evil is ever before us.
 - 1. It only takes a few moments reading the paper to to this in stark way.
 - 2. The thinking of today in so many places is to call evil, good and good, evil.

To know evil, you have only to stand on the road in Jasper, Texas, where on June 7, 1998, three white men offered a ride to a 49-year-old black man, James Byrd Jr., who was on his way home from an anniversary party. Instead of taking him where he wanted to go, they beat, kicked, and tortured him merely for the color of his skin, and then spray-painted his face black before chaining him by the ankles to the back of their truck. As they sped down an isolated logging road, dragging him for nearly three miles, he tried keeping his head up, but his skin ripped off, his bones broke, and his elbows were shattered to the bone. When his head hit a culvert, it was ripped off, along with his right arm. What was left of his torso was dumped in front of a church for its black congregation to find. In TNT's documentary, *The Faces of Fear*, Dr. Molefi Kete Asante of Temple University points out multiple circles still evident on the road, drawn there to mark 75 separate places where Byrd's body parts were found. "On this road," Asante says quietly, "I am confronted with the immensity of the cruelty that can exist in the human heart."

By, Katherine Ramsland, found on: http://www.crimelibrary.com/criminal_mind/psychology/evil1/1.html

- 3. This is a stark example, but there are countless others that are around us everyday. There is no person in this world who is untouched by evil and its effects. And frankly, there is no person in this room who has not committed some evil.
- B. What is going on?
 - 1. These are simply stark manifestations of the condition in which every man, woman and child is found.

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2. It is called sin. A simple word, a much used word, yet a much misunderstood word.
3. The reality is that because all of mankind is fallen in sin, that evil will constantly be rearing its ugly head.
4. And before any of us pats ourselves on the back saying that we would never do such a thing, remember Romans 3:10-18, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; 11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; 12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.” 13 “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,” “THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”; 14 “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”; 15 “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, 16 DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, 17 AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.” 18 “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”
5. Because of our sinfulness there is a flow that occurs within each of us.
 - a. Starts with a sinful heart.
 - b. Moves to sinful motives—the hidden thoughts of the heart.
 - c. Grows into sinful thinking.
 - d. And often will result in sinful actions.
 - e. Show in James 1:13 and 4:1ff the flow.
6. This is reality for both the unbeliever and the believer.
 - a. For the unbeliever, there is no lasting change because it is not flowing from a changed heart. We can create rules and laws, but it will never change a sinful heart. Only God changes a heart.
 - b. For the believer, however, there is great hope. God is at work within us. The Holy Spirit is building and changing us.
7. The forgotten reality of change.
 - a. Change does not happen because we let God do His work.

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- b. Change does not happen because we get people to pray for us regarding our porn problem, our bitter spirit, our lazy hands, our angry mouths.
 - c. Change begins because our heart is made new in Jesus Christ but that change will not continue in some magical way.
 - d. Change happens because we obey. We obey out of a changed heart, because we are now following Jesus and not self.
 - e. Change will never occur when we begin to lose sight of the processes that God uses and commands us to do as believers in the presence of sin and evil.
- C. Paul tells us in Romans 12:21, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”
- 1. The word for “evil” here means something bad, wrong, that causes injury or harm.
 - 2. The word for “good” speaks of that which is useful, beneficial, upright, fair, kind and generous.
 - 3. The idea that Paul is saying is that evil exists and this is a fact.
 - a. But we cannot allow it to conquer us.
 - b. Rather, we need to recognize its existence and presence and use the tool that God has given us as believers to conquer it instead—and that tool is “good.”
 - 4. But how is that done? What kind of good is it that we are to do? What are some practical measures that we can carry in our minds that will help us each day in the battle against evil?
 - 5. Philippians 4:2-9 gives us three key areas in which we can practice good in the face of evil.

II. How To Overcome Evil With Good.

- A. Establish Godly Attitudes (six key attitudes).
- 1. Peace (2).
 - a. Leave no room for bitterness.
 - b. Note that bickering and hurtful thoughts and words among the brethren is a public sin that hurts the whole church; therefore, the whole church is brought into involvement.

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- c. Note, however, that the involvement is toward a biblical solution.
- d. We must remember that it is easy, very easy to fall into anger and resentment.
 - (1) Bitterness is oh so evil.
 - (2) It eats at us and cuts into us. And left alone it will always cause trouble.
 - (3) It is born from our sinfulness, as Romans 3.14 says, “our mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.”
- e. So to combat it is to cultivate the attitude of peace.
 - (1) It is a same-mindedness.
 - (a) But this is not some vague “same-mindedness,” it is to be “in the Lord.”
 - (b) This means that our peace can only properly be framed, defined, and lived out by the Word of God for the glory and cause of Christ.
 - (c) Too many seek peace without considering Christ, and this always ends in failure.
 - (d) You will see conflict in this church. It is the reality of sinners who seek to walk by grace but who also stumble or act unwisely.
 - (e) But when it happens we must learn to respond in such a way that it is Christ-centered and Bible-centered.
 - (2) They were to have unity in their thoughts for one another.
 - (3) It is the mind set that determines that personal rights will be set aside for the sake of harmony.
 - (4) It is the mind set that has determined to forgive even before the person comes to seek forgiveness.

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Let me give you a simple plan on fighting this in your own hearts and lives. We can all be masters of deceit in many ways. And we can give an external perception that all is well when, in fact, our hearts are filled with envy or bitterness.

But one place that it usually begins to show itself is in the home. A husband or wife begins to complain about some other people at the church. The spouse needs to step in and gently, but firmly begin to help them see what is happening. Please do not misunderstand me, the complaint may be a legitimate one, but then the spouse must help them determine what is the best thing to do. Is it simply to forgive? Is it to confront? Is it to gather more information to verify a perspective? But what a spouse can't do is just let the other build a heart of bitterness for it will ultimately explode and destruction shall surely follow.

2. Concern for other believers (3).
 - a. Again, the whole church was to be involved in the solution.
 - (1) Not side-taking.
 - (2) Not giving opportunity for gossip.
 - (3) Not just being there to listen to either one of them.
 - b. It is the reality that we truly are all one body.
 - (1) Therefore it makes as much sense to allow disharmony to take place in the church as it does to allow an infection to go untreated in your body.
 - (2) We are all responsible for one another.
 - (3) This is what the "one anothers" are all about in the New Testament.
 - (4) "help" means literally to "take or receive" connected with the preposition "together."
 - (a) It pictures the church coming up and becoming actively involved with the problem.
 - (b) Not ignoring it or thinking that it will just go away.
 - (c) Rather, together, the church is to grab hold of the problem and assist the two ladies in resolving it.

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- c. If there is evil, or sin, or struggle that you see, especially within the church, how are you actively assisting in resolving it?
- 3. Joy (4).
 - a. Not an option.
 - b. Not something only done occasionally, always.
 - c. This joy is not a simple emotion. It is in the Lord. It is a joy that comes from above, from God and your right understanding of Him and His character.
 - d. Christ said in Matthew 5:11-12 that when we are persecuted for His sake that we are to rejoice! Why, because our reward in heaven shall be great.
 - e. 1 Peter 4:12-14, “Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”
 - (1) The more you suffer for Christ, the more you are to rejoice.
 - f. James says that we are to count it all joy when we have miserable things (trials) come upon us.
 - (1) It is not a silly smile or an empty “praise the Lord.”
 - (2) It is like what Peter says in 1 Peter 1:6, you rejoice even though you are distressed by trials.
 - (3) Why? Because you know God is at work in you. That everything comes ultimately from the hand of God and therefore you can be at rest.
 - g. Job.
 - (1) Lost it all.
 - (2) But though distressed, said that he didn’t have anything when he was born, and regardless, the Lord is still to be blessed.

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4. Humility (5a).
 - a. To stop forcing yourself to be the focus. To stop being vain.
 - b. Here it is an attitude of gentle, humble kindness.
 - c. Your rights are not the issue.
 - d. And notice that Paul says that it is to be an obvious attitude (known to all men).
 - e. This seems to mean that it is not enough to seek to be humble, but that it is to be acknowledged by others as well. If others are not consistently seeing it, then regardless of what you think, you are showing it.

5. Hope (5b).
 - a. This is what is called future grace.
 - b. It is the promise that Christ is close at hand and that His appearance is soon.
 - c. It is Christ-centered.
 - d. In 1 Peter 3:16, we are commanded to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts.
 - (1) What will be the result as we do?
 - (2) Hope.
 - (3) “...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you...”

6. Thankful prayer (6-7).
 - a. Fear and anxiety is its opponent.
 - b. There is no excuse for worry, “in nothing.”
 - c. We combat worry and fear (two common and great sins, for they are sins against the character of God) today by chemicals.
 - d. But Paul says to slay that vicious dragon of worry, we must attack with thankful prayer.

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- e. Paul prayed three times that God would remove the thorn in the flesh.
 - (1) He could be more effective.
 - (2) But God was unwilling, why? Because He wanted Paul to accomplish all things not by his own power, but by the grace of God alone.
 - f. Prayer is not proper unless it is connected with a spirit of thankfulness.
 - (1) Are you one who strives to overcome evil with good?
 - (2) Then you are a person who is marked by a thankful spirit before the Lord in all things.
7. So the first area to begin to overcome evil with good is through the cultivation of godly attitudes. The second area is. . . .
- B. Establish Godly Thinking.
- 1. We are a nation of people who think wrong. The reason for this is that the first person we consider with our decisions is not God, but ourselves.
 - 2. I have found that all destructive or sinful decisions started by bad/wrong thinking. Always. Now, for some wrong thoughts come to mind and they give into them immediately, making them appear to be impulsive. But really it is just lacking self-control in this area.
 - a. **Proverbs 25:28** ²⁸ *Like a city that is broken into and without walls Is a man who has no control over his spirit.*
 - b. For others, there is a battle against the wrong thinking, but it is with the wrong weapons.
 - 3. Paul tells us to ponder these things. They are to capture our thinking. We are to chew and focus our minds upon these things.
 - a. That requires an act of the will.
 - b. The biblical model of dealing with problems is through a biblical solution.
 - 4. To think right always requires us to start with God.
 - a. We are not dwell on worthless or evil things.

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- b. We are not to focus of sin.
- c. We are to actively bring our minds off of those things of no value and onto godly issues.
- d. For many that will require changing what you watch or read. But to overcome evil, you must develop godly thinking.
 - (1) Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - (2) Eph. 4:22-23, "... in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind."
 - (3) **Colossians 3:16** ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. . . ."
 - (4) **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** ⁴ "... the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. ⁵ *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."
- 5. So, to overcome evil, we must establish godly attitudes, godly thinking, and lastly, we must
- C. Establish Godly Actions.
 - 1. To do this requires four things.
 - a. You need to learn, receive what is taught, hear, and see.
 - b. In other words, you look for godly examples, study them and follow them.
 - 2. Paul says to practice them. This is a repetition of actions until it is part of your lifestyle.
 - 3. To combat evil, you cannot just have godly attitudes or godly thinking, you must put them into practice.

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- a. James 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.
- b. And you must understand that it is hard work. You must be diligent.

III. Conclusion.

- A. God gives us a great promise then at the end of all this.
- B. As these are developed, then God will be with you.
 1. Is He already with you? Yes.
 2. But this is a unique presence, one in which He covers and protects you. One in which He comforts and cares for you.
- C. Beloved, pursue these things and overcome evil with good.

Small Group Questions

- **In a world filled with evil, what are the various approaches Christians have used to deal with it?**
- **How does a church seeking to be missional need to see it?**
- **If you were forced to make a choice (and you are) which of the three key areas described in the sermon is where you are seeing the greatest challenge and the greatest change? How can your Community Group help you and encourage you in these?**