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Swift Creek Baptist Church (swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com)  
18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
Sunday, November 5, 2023

## Romans 12:9, 17, 19b, 21      “How Evil Is Overcome”

Intro. The Bible has much to say about evil, from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, there are over 450 references to evil in the Bible! Though God created a perfect paradise for Adam and Eve and declared it good (Gen. 1:31), evil was already present in the Universe due to the rebellion of Satan and his fallen angels. So from the very beginning of man, God warned of the danger of evil. In Genesis 2 God makes two references to “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (vv.9, 17). Man was forbidden to eat of that tree. Otherwise, he would “know [by experience] good and evil” (v.22). Sadly, Adam and Eve chose to eat of that fruit and so evil was able to enter into the human race. It didn’t take long before murder took place, even by Abel’s own brother. Then, several generations later, we read in Gen. 6:5 that “the LORD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every intent of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually” (cf. 8:21). Likewise, Jer. 17:9 says, “The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked; who can know it?”<sup>1</sup> Evil within the heart of man is a major problem, and the potential for manifesting *great* evil is always present.

How do we define evil? Evil is what is bad, disagreeable, malignant. Yet Isa. 5:20 warns, “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil....” That is increasingly happening in our world today. We live in a twisted world of fools who don’t even know the difference between good and evil! Do *you* know the difference? If you think so, listen to this warning of Jesus in Luke 16:15, “...what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” So the Bible exhorts us to learn to discern the difference between good and evil (2 Sam. 14:17; 1 Kings 3:9; Heb. 5:14). One thing is clear from Scripture, and that is *God* is the One who determines what is evil. 48 times we read that some individual or group did “evil in the sight of the LORD,”<sup>2</sup> *not* the opinion of man.<sup>3</sup> Let me give some examples of what God calls evil. The shedding of innocent blood is a grave evil (Gen. 4:10-11; 9:6; Ex. 20:13; 1 Sam. 23:9; 2 Kings 21:16; Prov. 1:16; 6:17; Isa. 59:7). Hamas shed much innocent blood on Oct. 7, including babies and children. Yet we have thousands marching in the streets, even in America, justifying the evil that they have done! False religion, worshiping any other god than the true God revealed in the Bible, is a grave evil (Ex. 20:3-5; Dt. 7:25-26; 12:31; 27:15; 2 Kings 17:17; Jer. 2:13). Pride is a great evil (Prov. 6:17; 16:5; Isa. 13:11), the original sin of Satan. Adultery is called an abomination (Eze 22:11; cf. Ex. 20:14). In fact, if you want more examples of evil, just look up what God declares to be an abomination in the Bible,<sup>4</sup> including sowing discord among brethren (Prov. 6:19).

One way we can recognize evil is the fact that it is at the root of all the suffering and death within humanity. In fact, the Hebrew word for “evil” (*ra*) often refers to the adverse results

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<sup>1</sup> The Bible clearly teaches the doctrine of the total depravity of man. For example, Aaron said in Ex. 32:22, “You know the people, that they [are set] on evil.”

<sup>2</sup> See Judges 2:11; 3:7, 12; 4:1, 6:1; 2 Sam. 12:9; 1 Kings 11:6; 14:22; etc.

<sup>3</sup> See Dt. 12:8; Judges 17:6; 21:25; Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 16:2; 21:2; 30:12; Isa. 5:21.

<sup>4</sup> Some examples include homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13), transexual dress (Dt. 22:5), dishonest scales (Prov. 11:1), injustice (Prov. 17:15), and sacrifice by the wicked (Prov. 21:27; Isa 1:13). Prov. 6:17-19 declares these additional abominations: “... A lying tongue, ... a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness *who* speaks lies....” See also Ex. 20:3-17; Dt. 27:15-26; Gal. 5:19-21.

of evil<sup>5</sup>. For example, Ps. 23:4 says, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil (*ra*) ...,” in other words, I will fear no harm or adversity.<sup>6</sup> We live in a sin-cursed world that experiences disease, storms, droughts, and so forth. That’s on top of all the suffering caused by the hatred and injustice of sinful man.

You had better learn not only to discern evil but also to overcome evil. In fact, Romans 12:21 specifically *commands* us not to be overcome by evil. After Abel murdered his brother, God said in Gen. 4:7, “... if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire<sup>7</sup> is for you, but you should rule over it.” Here are some reasons why we must not allow evil to prevail in our lives: Prov. 11:19 says, “As righteousness [leads] to life, So he who pursues evil [pursues it] to his own death.” Then v.27 of that chapter says, “...trouble will come to him who seeks [evil].” 1 Pet. 3:12, “...the face of the LORD [is] against those who do evil” (Psa. 34:16). Do evil and you will taste the bitter consequences of evil.

Here’s another problem we face today. The Bible predicts that in the last days, evil will become more widespread. 2 Tim. 3:13 says that “evil men ... will grow worse and worse...” Jesus predicted that in the last days, lawlessness will abound, [and] the love of many will grow cold (Mt. 24:12; cf. 2 Thess. 2:6-8a).

This battle against evil is a difficult battle, and even preachers have lost that battle. Yet the fact is, only the Lord can give us true victory over evil. So this morning I am going to show you that evil must be confronted and overcome in a *number* of ways, and all must be utilized to achieve true victory. First of all:

## I. BATTLE EVIL WITH PARENTAL DISCIPLINE

Prov. 22:15 says, “Foolishness [is] bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.”

That kind of parental discipline was commonly practiced in our country through the 1960’s, but we largely abandoned strong parental and school discipline by the ‘70s. Tell me, is there more evil or less evil since then? Looking back, there were times when I needed to use stronger parental discipline.

I urge parents here today to accept the fact that the battle against evil begins in the home and you need to do your job! Don’t allow your child to become ensnared by evil.

## II. GOVERNMENT MUST RESTRAIN EVIL

When God permitted Israel to have a king, God said of Saul, “He it is who shall restrain my people” (1 Sam. 9:17b ESV). One of the King’s jobs was to restrain evil in society. Romans 13:1 says that “governing authorities... are appointed by God.” Why? He goes on to say in v.4, “... he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil.”<sup>8</sup> God ordained the death penalty, and nine times in Deuteronomy He said it was intended “to put away the evil” (Dt. 13:5; 17:7, 17; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21-22, 24; 24:7; cf. Jud. 20:13).

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<sup>5</sup> This is called natural evil as opposed to moral evil.

<sup>6</sup> Other examples include Ruth 1:21; Job 5:19; 30:26; Ps. 34:21; 41:8; 91:10; Prov. 22:3; Isa. 47:11.

<sup>7</sup> This same contrast is found in Gen. 3:16, “To the woman He said: “...Your desire [shall be] for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”

<sup>8</sup> See also 1 Pet. 2:14.

Yet we are living in a day when the forces of evil want to disrespect and even defund the police. They elect prosecutors and judges who fail to do their job of executing justice on those who do evil. What has been the result? There has been an increase in murders and violent crime, such as carjacking. Murders are up 75% in Henrico County just in the last few years. When government doesn't restrain evil, we will surely see more of it. So this Tuesday, I encourage you to vote for candidates who will support law enforcement!

In this battle against evil, we must also:

### III. RESIST EVIL INFLUENCES

We do have evil within, but we also have evil influences on the outside. So what should we do to avoid being overcome by these evil influences? First, know when to:

A. Practice Biblical Separation – While we *are* to be salt and light to this dark, evil world (Mt. 5:13-16), we are to separate ourselves from *participating* in the evil practices of this world. Ex. 23:2 says, “You shall not follow a crowd to do evil...” Even if a large crowd does something, that doesn't make it right. So instead of following the crowd who is doing evil, we should separate ourselves and have nothing to do with them. 2 Cor. 6:17 says, “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean...”<sup>9</sup>

Why should we separate ourselves from evil influences? 1 Cor. 15:33 says, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits.’” If you hang out with the wrong crowd, you will tend to imitate their behavior.<sup>10</sup>

Beginning in 2020 we were confronted with a very contagious Covid virus. We were quite willing to separate ourselves, especially from someone that we knew was contagious. We would even separate ourselves from people who appeared to be perfectly healthy. How much more should we separate ourselves from evil, to protect ourselves from its deadly spread? Paul said in 1 Cor. 5:6, “...Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”<sup>11</sup> Sin tends to spread like yeast spreads and affects the whole lump of dough.

So if you don't separate yourself from evil, it will tend to spread and afflict your own soul.

B. Avoid and Resist Temptation – Jesus taught us to pray, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Mt. 6:13). He also taught us to “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed [is] willing, but the flesh [is] weak” (Mt. 26:41). We should acknowledge our weaknesses and prayerfully watch out for temptation and avoid or escape temptation whenever we recognize it (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12-13). In fact, Paul commanded us to “Flee sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18; cf. 2 Tim. 2:22) and “idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14).

So the main strategy regarding temptation that we are to employ is not resistance, but to avoid it or flee from it! Practice biblical separation.

Furthermore, we must not only battle evil on the outside, but also:

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<sup>9</sup> See also Ps. 1:1. Prov. 24:1 says, “Do not be envious of evil men, Nor desire to be with them.”

<sup>10</sup> 3 John 1:11 says, “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil...”

<sup>11</sup> See also vv.7-8. This was spoken in the context of the need to remove an unrepentant profession believer from the congregation by means of church discipline, lest such sin spread to others.

#### IV. BATTLE EVIL WITHIN

There is plenty of evil *out* in the world. But we need to recognize and deal with the evil that is *within* us, even as Christians. The apostle Paul acknowledged the problem of evil within in Rom. 7:19 when he said, “For the good that I will [to do], I do not do; but the evil I will not [to do], that I practice” (see also vv.20-21). James 1:14 says, “... each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.”

So what should we do? The starting place is a matter of attitude. We should:

A. Abhor Evil – Ps. 97:10 says, “You who love the LORD, hate evil!” Amos 5:15 says, “Hate evil, love good...” Likewise, Rom. 12:9 says, “... Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.”<sup>12</sup> We are to recognize evil for what it is and abhor it; hate it; be repulsed by it. We are much more likely to do evil if we delight in it rather than abhor it.

Now when you regard evil as despicable and repulsive, then you will have less difficulty taking the next step:

B. Turn from Evil – Isa. 1:16 says, “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil.” Likewise, 1 Pet. 3:10-11 says, “He who would love life and see good days,... let him turn away from evil...”<sup>13</sup>

Job was a very righteous man, and one reason is found in Job 1:8 where it says that he “shunned evil.” He turned away from evil.

We ought to turn from evil the way we should turn from something repulsive or dangerous.

C. Trust in the Leading and Power of the Holy Spirit – Gal. 5:16 says, “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” (See also Rom. 8:4, 13). That means live by the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. He will lead you away from evil and empower you to resist both inward and outward temptation. The Holy Spirit is God’s answer to human moral weakness.

Yet what should you do when you yield to temptation and do evil? To overcome evil we need to:

D. Confess Our Sins – 1 Jn. 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us [our] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When we truly confess our sins, we agree with God that what we have done was sinful and evil. Again, contrast what is “evil in the sight of the Lord” and what is evil in our own eyes! Then we can experience cleansing from evil.

During Communion today, I encourage you to confess your sins by agreeing with God that what you have done the sinful. We should really confess our sins as soon as we are convicted by God’s Word or His Holy Spirit that we have sinned.

E. Claim the Forgiveness of Christ’s Blood – In addition to the forgiveness promised in 1 John 1:9, Rev. 12:11 says, “And they overcame him [the devil<sup>14</sup>, the accuser of the brethren] by

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<sup>12</sup> See also Prov. 8:13; Jude 1:23. In contrast, the ungodly love evil. Prov. 10:23 says, “To do evil [is] like sport to a fool...” Micah 3:2 speaks of those “who hate good and love evil.”

<sup>13</sup> See also Psa. 34:14; 119:101; Prov. 3:7; 14:10; Jer 25:5; 1 Thess. 5:22.

the blood of the Lamb....” When the devil accuses and condemns you for a sin that you have confessed and asked forgiveness for, then you remind him that Jesus shed His blood and died for your sins and you thereby have just overcome both the devil and that sin! Jesus was the victim of great evil, but God turned evil into the greatest good when Jesus provided forgiveness and eternal life by his sacrifice.

Now in spite of what you do, you will still be confronted with evil in the lives of others. So I want to share one last strategy in the battle against evil:

## V. BATTLE EVIL WITH GOOD, NOT MORE EVIL

I’m speaking here of what we should do in our personal relationships. First:

A. Do Not Pay Evil for Evil – Three times in the New Testament it says, “Repay no one evil for evil” (Rom. 12:17; 1 Th. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9). Likewise, Prov. 20:22 says, “Do not say, ‘I will recompense evil’; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.” Jesus said in Mt. 5:39, “But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (see context of vv.38-42). When you repay evil for evil, then you are just adding to the problem of evil. Don’t sink down to their level.

Instead, we are told that we should:

B. Overcome Evil with Good - Rom. 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Jesus said in Luke 6:27, “... Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.” When we respond to evil with more evil, then evil only escalates. But when we respond to evil by doing good, we overcome evil. We diffuse and disarm the power of evil.

Paul gives one example in v.20 (quoting from Prov. 25:21), “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink....”

So when someone does you wrong, try responding by doing something good for that person, and see what happens. At the very least, they will be much less likely to continue evil against you, and you may win over an enemy to become a friend.

Conclusion: So what will you do about the problem of evil? Will you be overcome and ensnared by evil? Will you escalate evil? Or will you overcome evil in your own life, and do your part to lessen evil in the lives of others? Parents and government have a responsibility to restrain evil. We must battle evil both from without and within. Don’t pay evil for evil but overcome evil with good.

Yet in spite of all we can do to battle evil, evil will continue until Jesus comes again and vanquishes evil once and for all (cf. Mal. 4:1). When that happens, then Rev. 21:5 will come to pass, “Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’” After evil is removed (v.8), then what God says in v.4 will come to pass, “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” What a day that will be! It is distressing to see the growth and spread of evil, but that is a sign that the return of Jesus in the end of evil is getting closer! I say, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

So I call upon any unbelievers here today to repent of your sins, and trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Let him save you and empower you against evil. Any Christians here today

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<sup>14</sup> The devil is evil with a d added to the front!

who have fallen victim to evil, confess your sins, turn from your sins, and make things right with God this very day!

Sources: Oswald T. Allis, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, p. 201; A search of "evil" in Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:80] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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Additional Scripture verses about evil:

Gen. 50:20, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; [but] God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as [it is] this day, to save many people alive." The greatest example of evil turned into good is the cross of Jesus. God turn that great evil into great good as millions have found forgiveness and eternal life through His sacrifice.

2 Chron. 12:14, Rehoboam "did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD."

2 Chron. 33:9, "So Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel."

Jer. 13:23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? [Then] may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil."

Jer. 18:7-8, "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy [it], if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it."

Amos 5: 14, "Seek good and not evil, that you may live...."

Rom. 16:19, "... I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple [or innocent] concerning evil."

Eph. 6:13, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day...." There "evil" could refer to moral evil, or the time of great trouble.

1 Tim. 6:10-11, "For the love of money is a root of all [kinds of] evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things...."

Church discipline is another way that we are to restrain evil, but only applies to professing Christians (1 Cor. 5:12-13; Rev. 2:2). That, too, has largely been abandoned as a common practice, and there is less restraint of evil within the church.

The problem of evil (why a good, loving and all-powerful God allows evil) is addressed in Judges 19-20; Job 3, 8-14; 21-22, 27; Daniel 11:1-35; Habakkuk 1:1-17; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; Hebrews 10:32-39; Revelation 10:1-11. It is best not to focus on the "why" but on God, who enables us to overcome evil, especially in the end.