

Evil Inside? (The Answer)

Reconnect – November 21 2010



Text: Romans 7:14-8:4; Romans 5:6-11

Key Thought: Experiencing God’s forgiveness in our own lives makes us part of His response to evil.

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. (Romans 8, NLT)

Pre-Intro: “When I Am King” (Great Big Sea – song)

Intro: Kicking butt and taking names

Q: How many people have heard that song before? Anyone tell me what it’s about?

(what they would do if/when they were in charge, and how they would do such a better job)

- It’s a fun song, with a catchy tune, and it’s a tempting thought – how much better COULD someone else do the job of running the earth?
- (Christmas is coming, when we all get to wear paper crowns around the turkey table anyway)

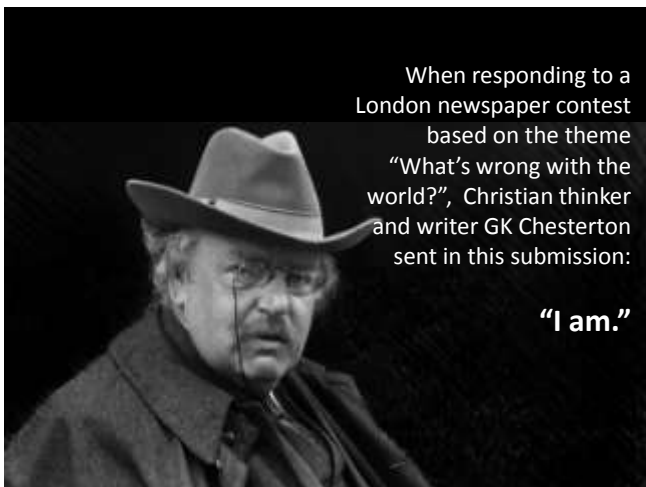


- We look at all the evil in our world – from hurts we inflict on each other to natural disasters who victimize the weak and the innocent – and we think that if we could only have the means, we could fix it, somehow or other – just put us in the game, coach!
- Or, if we’re done fantasizing, we might pray that God would deal with evil – with those who oppress us, those who have hurt us, those who are suffering, that God would help them and heal them

- And our hurt is added to when He doesn't do what we ask Him to do
- He says He has the power to fix it, He says that He loves us – you put those two things together, it seems there's only one logical answer if it's not happening – and that is, He hasn't been completely honest with us
- We get angry at God when we think like that – we doubt him, we want to push Him to the sidelines of our lives – and we think, someone could do better!
- The problem is, it's a lot harder than it looks...!

Houston... we ARE the problem...

- We want God to deal with evil, fix everything, but our prayers are hindered... by us standing in the way
- God would have to go through us to fix evil – he would have to mow us down because we are part of the problem, intertwined with it
- One of the stories Jesus told, (find it in Matthew's biography of Jesus), a parable, spoke to this question, where a farmer had weeds planted among his crops by an enemy, and things came up a mess, crops and weeds intertwined – just like good and evil in us and among people in our world
- His answer in the parable was to wait until everything was ready to harvest, because only then could everything be fixed properly
- GK Chesterton, in response to a London newspaper essay contest question with the topic "What is wrong with the world?" – "Dear Sir, 'What's wrong with the world?' I am. Signed, G. K. Chesterton" (as quoted in Jud Wilhite's Uncensored Truth, p.133)



- – and that's for sure – it's a maybe that we might be, could be part of the solution, with some help...

Triple threat: evil from the world, the flesh and the devil

- Sources of evil – the world, the flesh and the devil – week 1, 2, 3
- We are definitely under attack, and we see it every day, especially when we slow down and do an inspection in our lives
 - The world – the evil in it, the evil in us – the crooked lines we think should be straight
 - The flesh – temptation and the lies that go with it – “give in, it’s not that bad”, “if you don’t give in you’ll die”, “you can’t resist this, so just give in now”
 - The devil – trying to establish a rule based on fear and lies – his native language

How does forgiveness make any difference?



- Forgiveness is what lets a relationship go forward
- Think about the people who are closest to you – they would never be there unless you had forgiven them at some point
- The people who can’t forgive – who can’t overlook or take the brunt of someone else’s mistakes (whether against them or otherwise) – are the people who sadly are isolated from everyone else
- We learn about forgiveness, better or worse, by the family we grow up in – some families are better at it than others – but one of the defining characteristics of family is that you forgive each other – it’s the training ground for the rest of life outside the walls of your house
- There are many ways to combat evil – you can run from it, you can fight it – and at times both those options are needed – but ultimately, when you run evil increases, and when you fight it, no matter what you do, you can’t stamp it out, because it is rooted in human hearts
- But the third way is to confront it, and when you find it in a person, find a way to reconcile – to forgive

But what if they don’t want to be forgiven?

- You might say that if they don’t want to be forgiven, then all you’re doing is painting over the problem, which doesn’t actually solve a problem at all
- And you’re right – you can’t force forgiveness to be accepted or reconciliation to happen
- But we offer forgiveness not only for the sake of a relationship, but for the sake of our own souls too – forgiveness is the way to be set free from the prison of pain caused by evil – to be set free from the “replay” of the pain over and over again in our lives, in our grief, in our pain, in our anger

- And the one who set forgiveness in place – who created it as a response to evil in our world – is God
- First through putting in place a system of worship, and then ultimately in sending Jesus to die for us, God establishes a way for us to be forgiven, and offers that forgiveness to the world

A high price tag



- It's actually easier to fight or flee than to forgive – forgiveness is hard, a continual choosing to “not remember” something against someone – to wipe out their record – even though everything in us, in our natural selves, screams out that remembering is the only way justice will ever be done
- The price tag of forgiveness is putting that justice in God's hands, where He has always said He would make sure that it was done, and instead finding our place in the scheme of God's forgiveness – in the shadow of the cross, where forgiveness truly began
- Forgiveness is the only thing that lets our world move forward – whether our own relationships person to person, or on a greater scale – is our capacity to forgive – otherwise, we are continually battling over ashes
- Think about situations you have seen or experienced where people have refused to forgive – either you have refused to forgive them, or they have refused to forgive you – all that's left of a relationship, all that's left of a partnership, or a marriage, is dust and ashes

Forgiveness – forgive who?

- **Should we forgive ourselves?** Some say yes... like Jack Bauer and his imam
 - Forgiveness – Jack Bauer's unfortunate example – trying, pathetically, to forgive HIMSELF – we forgive ourselves way too much, way too easily, and even when we tell ourselves, “I will never get over this” – we just lie to ourselves, and ultimately, we DO get over whatever it was that we thought we'd never get over
- **Should we forgive others?** Yes... but it's really hard to do for real... really hard
- **Should we forgive God?** Maybe... but only in the sense where we would see a child who had gotten themselves into trouble and thrown a tantrum at their parents and gotten angry at them, thinking they had mistreated him...
- **But it starts with God forgiving us** – and with us humbling ourselves enough to ask for and receive it

God is slow because He wants all to come to repentance – II Peter 3:8-10, NLT

But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent. But the day of the Lord will come as unexpectedly as a thief. Then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment.

- Paul – I don't do what I WANT to do, etc.
- We are hardwired wrong – we have a flaw – not a design flaw, but something that was broken very early on in our design – something that try as we might, I can't fix

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

Experiencing God's forgiveness in our own lives makes us part of His response to evil.

When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. **Romans 5:6-11, NLT**



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Romans 5:6-11, NLT

Conclusion: fighting cancer



- One of the scariest words you can hear – anyone can hear – is the word “cancer” – and believe me, I don’t raise it lightly - even if now it’s not the certain death sentence that it was thirty years ago when we were young, it’s still a shadow across our lives and the lives of those we love
- Is there anyone untouched by it? And all of its ghastly varieties – the body, out of control, multiplying cells and helping what will ultimately destroy it, one piece at a time – and the body’s immune system has no idea any of this is going on – it doesn’t do anything to try to stop it
- CFRA was doing a cancer research telethon last week, and as part of it they were interviewing Dr. John Bell of the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute – he’s doing groundbreaking work in the area of oncolytic viruses – trying to develop a virus that would target cancer cells and make the body realize that they are harmful – so that the body’s own immune system would target and kill the cancer cells
- To train the body so that instead of nourishing what was killing it, that it would realize how harmful it was and start attacking it – so that ultimately life would spread and not death
- Using something so ugly, normally so repulsive, in order to bring life and health, is revolutionary
- Or is it?
- As I listened I thought what a picture it was of our struggle with the spiritual cancer called sin and evil
- We think that we can fight it with surgery – if we cut enough out of our life, we’ll be OK – but then it comes back – and is worse than ever
- We think that we can fight it with therapies, with training ourselves to do better – but we exhaust ourselves (like chemo) and we still fall and fall and fall
- But the death of Jesus has made a way for the Spirit of God to live and move in us – to bring His life to us, a life that has no tolerance for sin and evil, that will destroy it, and work through us to do it
- A horrible event, an abuse of justice, something so wrong – but yet it can bring life to you and me
- It’s a life that is dependent on God and his mercy and forgiveness – a life that is being changed a little at a time, in the fight of a lifetime that will one day pay off with perfection, forever – freedom from pain, from grief, from hurt, from loss, from loneliness, from rejection – and the list goes on and on, a list as long as all the wrong we’ve ever done, and the wrong that has ever been done to us

- And today, as we end our service, we want to in the face of evil and hurt and pain and death, remember the evil and hurt and pain and death that led to our new life – the death and life of Jesus, and the sacrifice that He made, through what we call communion – where we will drink wine and eat bread to remember His body and blood, just like He requested that we do in the pages of the Bible

Response: communion

- **Song: Grace Like Rain (Cam)**
- **Read Matthew 26:26-29, NLT**

As they were eating, Jesus took some bread and blessed it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, “Take this and eat it, for this is my body.”

And he took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, “Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many. Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father’s Kingdom.”

- **Prayer**