

John 11 (Part 2) :45–57 • Evil and Spiritual Warfare

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We're in the book of John, in the Gospel of John, and the 11th chapter. So open your Bible there, please.

We let our worship leaders pick their own songs. Within our playlist, sort of a thing. We don't tell them what they have to do on any particular Sunday. So I'm always interested, when I hear the songs that are being sung. Particularly as it relates to what I feel like the Lord has for us in the passage that we're going to be dealing with here. And what we're talking about, what we're dealing with here in these last verses of John chapter 11, is the presence of evil.

I was telling Sue as I was kind of studying this out, she asked me, she always asks me, how's it going? Because I lock myself in the den and I do my studying in there. And so every once in a while I come out for refreshment, or just to stretch my legs.

And she'll always say, how's it going? And this week I said, I don't want to teach on this. Because it's what we're seeing in these latter verses of John chapter 11 is just how evil evil can be. But I got to thinking, as I was just pondering the whole thing, this is what we deal with. And we have to address the reality and the existence of evil.

And we have to know also what does the Bible say to me as a believer? In terms of how I'm to deal with this. Because it is around us and it's getting, I don't know if you've noticed, but darker. Darkness seems to be getting darker or at least more prevalent, maybe. I don't know. I think darkness has always been very dark, but we simply have found new and exciting ways in our culture today to express it.

So here we are. And the second song that Dan did with the worship team this morning just kind of dealt with that whole issue of spiritual warfare. I don't know how many of you feel like you're going through spiritual warfare right now, like there's a battle going on. I want to tell you right off the get go that please don't allow yourself to slip into the idea that somehow you have less faith.

Or that you're somehow a second-class citizen in the Kingdom of God because you're battling. Battling is what we do. We battle. And this life, this Christian walk that we've been called into, is a battle. And if you're battling, you're normal. And you need to understand that first and foremost. So let's get into these verses.

John chapter 11, beginning at verse 45. We're going to read down to the end of the chapter. Now remember, this is right on the heels of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

"⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸If 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." ⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

⁵⁴Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

⁵⁵Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. ⁵⁶They were looking for Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, "What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?" ⁵⁷Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him." (ESV)

Let's pray. Father, as we look through these verses this morning, it is our desire, it is our hope, it is our prayer that you would be the one speaking. And even though these are challenging verses from the standpoint of just the level of darkness that we see portrayed here, we need to know and understand what it's all about and how you would have us to deal with it. We asked for your guidance this morning. And we pray that we would hear your voice. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.

This passage really kind of outlines for us two reactions to what Jesus did in the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The very first reaction is the positive one there in verse 45. John simply tells us that many of the Jews, and by the way, that's not just speaking of Jews in general. Whenever John uses that term, I would say the majority of the time it is referring to the Jewish religious leaders.

And so he's saying that many of the Jews, therefore, who'd come with Mary and seen what Jesus did, they ended up believing as a result of seeing that miracle take place. They had come to be present with Mary and Martha to mourn with them in the passing of their brother and went away believing.

Can you imagine going to a funeral or going to support a family to mourn and you end up walking away believing in something that you hadn't believed before? But it was too many people. It was undeniable. I mean, who else but God can raise a man from the tomb who'd been dead for four days and been in the tomb for four days.

So there you have in verse 45, this very brief, but very positive, sort of a reaction to what Jesus had done in raising Lazarus. And it would be great if it just ended there. If the chapter just ended, then we didn't have to go on and talk about any of the rest of this stuff.

It was like, hey, and as a result, people believed in Him. Yay. Praise the Lord. But it doesn't end there and it's almost inconceivable. That two people can see the same thing, witness the same event, and one of them goes away with a completely different reaction than the other. It just seems almost kind of crazy.

But that's what we see here. Because as we go on to read here, some of them go on with a very different attitude. But here's an important point, I think. And that is that the way people see miracles depends very largely and ultimately on their moral condition. In other words, the condition of their heart morally.

If you've ever been praying for people who don't know the Lord, that they might witness a miracle, so they would come to Christ, I need to tell you that isn't a guarantee. Miracles are wonderful. And I'm up for just about as many as God wants to do. But it isn't a guarantee that somebody's going to come to Christ just because they see a miracle.

And it is very evident from this passage. If a person's heart is filled with unbelief, even if they see somebody raised from the dead, it's not going to make any difference.

That's what we find here as we read on in verse 46, where it says, "⁴⁶but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done." And what that means is that some of the people who were there literally witnessed Lazarus walking out of the tomb, all wrapped up in his grave clothes. And rather than seeing what they saw as miraculous and praiseworthy and literally falling on their face before God in awe and reverence, they saw this as something that needed to be reported. And just that reality just kind of shocks us, right off the get go.

And it says in verse 47, "⁴⁷So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council" (and that of course refers to the Sanhedrin) "and said, "What are we to do?" (I want you to notice what they go on to say here) "For this man performs many signs." (And then they go on to say,) "⁴⁸If we let him go on like this," (if this keeps going) "everyone will believe in him," and I'll tell you what's going to happen afterwards. The Romans are going to waltz in here and they're going to take both our place and our nation.

So let me explain a little bit, just a couple of things. There are two notes that I want to bring out from what we hear going on in this conversation in the Sanhedrin. First of all, I want you to notice that they admit that He is doing miraculous works. Did you catch that? They start off by saying, "*this man performs many signs.*" Now these are His enemies, and yet they are freely admitting that He is performing many miraculous signs.

I mean it was like there had been too many miracles performed in too many places in front of too many people to any longer deny the reality of these miraculous works. And so you'll notice they just come out and they say it. And this is what's so incredible to me about the darkened mind is that it can kind of say in essence, don't confuse me with the facts. My mind is made up. It's like this man is performing many miraculous signs. And then to come after that and just say, we've got to do something about this.

But I want you to understand also the fear that they express here in this passage. What they are afraid of, according to what they say, is that the Romans are going to come in and take away "*our place and our nation.*" And you have to understand what is meant by that. Because what they are saying in essence is they believe that if people continue to hail Jesus as the Messiah, what they're afraid of is that they're going to come and by force, crown Him king. King of the Jews.

They knew how the Roman military would respond in that sort of a situation. And they were right, truly. The Roman military would swoop in and they would

do everything that they were afraid that they were going to do. They would destroy the temple, they would destroy the city of Jerusalem and they would scatter the people.

And this is what they're afraid of. And this is what they're expressing their fear about. They say this is what's going to happen if everybody believes in Him. That was their fear. Do you know what's interesting? 40 years from this time frame that we're studying, it did happen. In AD 70, the Romans did come into the city and they did tear it apart. And they did destroy the temple and they did scatter the people. But it wasn't because the people believed in Jesus. It was because they rejected their Messiah. So the very thing they feared that would happen happened anyway, but not for the reason that they gave.

In point of fact, it was because they rejected Jesus. Let me show you a passage on the screen. These are the words of Jesus from Matthew chapter 23. This is Jesus speaking, and He's literally mourning over the city. He says:

Matthew 23:37-39 (ESV)

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (and He's speaking there of their rejection of all that God has done, including the sending of Messiah. And so He says,) *"See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

And they will say that at the end of the tribulation period. And that's when they'll see Him again. But Jesus is saying here in this passage, your house is now left to you desolate. Why? Because even though I have longed to gather you as a hen would gather her brood under the shelter of her wings, you wouldn't have it. You just wouldn't have it.

So it goes on here, if you look with me in verse 49. And this is where Caiaphas speaks up. He's the high priest during that time. And he kind of makes this speech and he's pretty rude about it. He essentially kind of starts off by saying, you guys are really a bunch of idiots. That's really what it comes down to. And

he says, you don't really understand what's really going on here. And then he goes on to make this interesting statement "*that one man should die for the people,*" lest the whole nation perished. And then John goes on to explain that Caiaphas unconsciously and in fact involuntarily spoke prophetically about Jesus' death resulting in saving many.

But I want you to notice here, did you notice that John credits the prophecy to the office of high priest? Not to the man. Did you catch that? He said, "*but being high priest that year he prophesied*" so he credits it to the office knowing that the man himself was enveloped by the darkness of his own heart.

So the speech of Caiaphas convinces them. It says in verse 53, "⁵³*So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.*" Then of course Jesus was aware of all this. So in verse 54 we're told that He "*no longer walked openly among*" them, but went from there into the wilderness, and we think it was somewhere north of Jerusalem, and stayed there with his disciples.

And then the chapter ends with John kind of recording this talk among the people. As the Passover was beginning to approach, some of the people would come to Jerusalem ahead of time to make sure that they were going to be able to participate in the Passover ceremonies. So they came to make sure that they were ceremonially clean. And all these people that were beginning to gather now in Jerusalem started to talk among themselves.

And of course the topic of interest is Jesus. Because John ends the chapter by telling us, the religious leaders had put out the word that if anyone saw Jesus, they were to let them know so that they could arrest Him. So everybody expected that this is what was going to happen. And so they're talking and they're asking among themselves, so do you think He's going to even show? I mean, He's got to know what's going on. He's got to know they're out for Him. So do you think He's even going to come? I don't think He's even going to come.

I think the general consensus was they didn't think He was going to come. And that's kind of where the chapter ends. It's fairly easy to get to read through this story and get caught up in the drama and the details and miss what is probably one of the most incredible points about this whole story.

And that is the idea that religious people who claim to know God and to love God and to serve God, don't recognize their God when He shows up. And that's something that we have to emphasize from time to time. Just to kind of help us to see the impact of just what darkness produces in the life of an unbeliever.

It produces blindness. So here you have these religious people who claim to know God, love and serve God. And when God shows up on the scene, they want to kill Him. It's mind blowing. It really is truly mind blowing. But it raises our awareness of one of the most challenging issues that we have to address and the very thing that I just didn't want to even study through this weekend. And that is the existence of evil. The existence of wickedness.

The world desperately wants to believe that people are good naturally, that they're inherently good. And you hear unbelievers say it all the time. Occasionally you hear a believer say it. 'I just believe that people are inherently good.' People are not inherently good.

The world is evil. Jesus said, only God is good (Mark 10:18, Luke 18:19). There's only One who's good, and that's God. Evil is all around us. It doesn't mean that every single person is constantly doing evil all the time. But evil certainly exists and we run into it. It is becoming increasingly difficult not to.

So in the time that we have left here this morning, we're going to visit various Bible passages. And I'm going to show you a ton of passages on the screen here in just a moment, more than I probably ever have. I'm going to keep our projectionist very busy here this morning. But we're going to look at these things under 2 categories. And we'll put even the categories for those of you who like to take notes, this is what you're going to write down:

1. Understanding of the reality and origin of evil
2. Our biblical response to evil

First, we're going to look at understanding the reality and the origin of evil. What is our understanding of these things? And then finally our biblical response to evil. Those are the things that we're going to look at here this morning. And the first thing that you need to understand as we talk about evil is that there are 2 primary Hebrew words that are translated in your English Bible as 'evil.'

One of them speaks of bad things that can happen in our lives. And somebody might say 'a great evil happened to the brethren on their trip overseas' as an example of how that might be used. And that is a biblical usage of the word evil.

But there's another Hebrew word for evil that is often translated in a different way. It's often translated as just wickedness and that describes evil in a moral

sense. So you've got these 2 words. Evil as in evil happenings, bad happenings, and evil as in moral wickedness. Why do I give you that distinction? Well, if you don't understand that distinction, you're going to be confused when you start to ask the question, 'where did evil come from?'

What is the source? What is the origin of evil? I get that question a lot. Where did evil come from? Did God create evil. Now, most of you probably have the good sense from studying your Bible to know that God didn't create evil. Because the Bible says that God is good. And in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). John tells us in his first epistle, as a matter of fact.

But see, somebody who might be reading the King James Version of the Bible might be confused or even take issue with that statement. Let me show you why. Because, on the screen, from Isaiah chapter 45 verse 7, it says, this is the Lord speaking:

Isaiah 45:7 (KJV)

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

"*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:*" and so somebody looks at that and they're studying the King James or whatever, and they say, 'well, Pastor, you got a problem here when you tell me that God didn't create evil, because He says here that He did.' The problem is this is that first version of the Hebrew word evil that I was telling you about. Speaks of bad happenings. And that's why the more modern translations, frankly, do a better job. Let me show you how the ESV does the same verse:

Isaiah 45:7 (KJV)

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

Isaiah 45:7 (ESV)

I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things.

"*I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity;*" that's what that Hebrew word means. Bad happenings. Calamities. And God freely admits that He will allow calamity and will even bring upon people calamity. But He does not and has never brought moral wickedness because He can't. Because God is morally pure. And so that leaves us with the question,

who then is the author of evil? What is the source of evil? Well, we basically go through the scripture and we put together the clues.

Because there isn't an actual passage that says, so and so, this, such and such or whatever is the source of all evil. But I mean, I think we know the answer from the clues. But we have to piece them together almost kinda like detectives. Let me show you Isaiah chapter 14. This is where we learn about the source of evil. And this is speaking prophetically of Satan, Lucifer:

Isaiah 14:12-15 (ESV)

"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit."

And what we learned from this is that there was an attitude among one of these angels that God created that became so wicked and so self-serving and self-directed, that Satan literally originated these things. But see, we're given further insights in the words of Jesus. We actually went through this just a couple weeks ago. From John chapter 8, verse 44. Jesus is speaking of Satan here. He says:

John 8:44 (ESV)

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies

You've heard me say many times over the years that when the Bible refers to someone as the father of something, it's telling you that person is the source of that thing. So Jesus is telling us right here that Satan is the source of lies and deception.

He's the source. No one taught it to him. It became part of his nature or his character when he made the determination to be like God. So concerning this evil that was started by Satan that was authored or originated by Satan, it has now become fully entrenched in the world in which we live. Aren't we delighted?

And we're all a part of it and we've participated in it, but it's everywhere. Here's the point though. Now we've come to know Jesus Christ is Savior. We've come

to Him. And we've repented of those evil, wicked ways. We've come to the Lord and said, Lord, I so want to live for you. I want to live to serve you. I want to live to please you. I'm done living to please myself. And I want to live the life that you want me to live from this point on. And that's our heart, isn't it, as believers.

But the problem is we're still living in this evil world. And so what that does is that puts us squarely in the sights of the rest of the world. And that's something we're told even back in the Psalms. Look at Psalm chapter 37. It says:

Psalm 37:12 (ESV)

The wicked plots against the righteous and gnashes his teeth at him,

Isn't that just lovely? Those who are walking with the Lord are targets. And then in Psalm 83 verses 2 and 3, it says:

Psalm 83:2-3 (ESV)

For behold, your enemies make an uproar; those who hate you have raised their heads. They lay crafty plans against your people; they consult together against your treasured ones.

And this, again, these are reminders that, now that we've come to the Lord and we've put off the ways of darkness and now the light of the presence of Jesus literally lives within us, we are targets of the evil in this world. And it's going to affect us in many different ways. But we're told in these 2 passages from the Psalms that evil has a very specific goal in mind, and that is to attack those who are openly walking with the Lord. As Paul said, anyone who wants to live a righteous life will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12).

It's just simply going to happen. And then again, in the New Testament, Jesus made this clear in John 15, we're going to get to this in a little while:

John 15:18-21 (ESV)

"If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me."

"If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you." Here's the reason. He says, "If you were of the world," if you were of the darkness, "the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world," any longer, "but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

He says, *"Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. ²¹But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me."*

So we have the name of the Lord stamped on us in ways that the world can see, and so they're gunning for us. Here's the problem: all this opposition that we face as believers from a world that is full of darkness and evil can create in us a lot of different responses. Not all of them good. And it can create a we-versus-they sort of an attitude, where I don't know if we begin to see ourselves as the victim, but we definitely go on the defensive. And we're talking about the rotten evil scum of the world, and we forget a lot of very important things about what it means to deal with evil and the evil of this world.

Paul reminds us something very important: that it's not a we-versus-they sort of a us-against-them; here's the enemy, and we're the good guys; we're wearing the white hats; they got the black hats. Here's what Paul reminds us of in Ephesians chapter 6. He says:

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

And then Peter adds this:

1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)

Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

So it comes back to the source, doesn't it? We talked about the source of darkness, the source of evil. And that source continues to be the focal point of our enemy. And although people may be involved making life very difficult for you and me, and persecuting and hurting and hating, they are not the enemy. And that's the reminder that we're given here. So all of this insight leads us to the conclusion that the world is going to produce battles in our lives, but they are spiritual battles.

And spiritual battles need to be fought spiritually. You can't make a fist and hurt the devil. You can't make a fist and hurt Satan. You can't make a fist and make evil go away. You can't make a fist and pierce the darkness. One of the key passages that we're given in the Bible on spiritual battles is again from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It's up on the screen again for you, where he writes:

Ephesians 6:10-13 (ESV)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Finally, be strong in the Lord (not in yourself, but in the Lord) and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes (of your neighbor. No, it doesn't say that. It says the schemes) of the devil (doesn't it?). For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, (and again, we're reading this whole passage now,) but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (And then he goes on to say,) Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in (look at this in) the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

Is Paul telling you in me that there's such a thing as an evil day. You're darn tootin he is. He's telling you that there is such a thing as an evil day and it will come. And so you need to be prepared. Here's the good news: God's given you everything you need to be prepared. He's given you this whole armor. He's given you His word, which is the sword of that armor. He's given you all that you need to be defensive and even offensive related to the evil days that come.

I want you to look now, there's another wonderful passage about spiritual warfare that comes from 1 Peter, chapter 5. I love this passage where he says:

1 Peter 5:6-9 (ESV)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith...

Do you see in that single passage of scripture, Peter gives us no fewer than 5 directives for fighting spiritual battles and dealing with evil in our lives. What's the first thing he says? What do you see? The first thing: be humble. Be humble. Don't be prideful. Listen, pride is the downfall of people. Pride is the thing that gets in people's face and says, you can't talk to me that way. Don't go there. Be humble. Keep humble, right?

Second thing he says is: cast your worries on the Lord. Because in the day of evil, the enemy is going to try very hard to get worries to overwhelm you to the place of paralysis. And if it can paralyze you with fear, then you're not going to want to do anything. You're just going to want to sit and fret. And so he says, second thing you got to do is you got to put yourself in a position where you can actually fight the battle.

But that's going to happen only as you learn to cast your worries and anxieties on the Lord. Remembering this: he cares for you. So many times we go through a day of evil like Paul talks about, and we assume, or we conclude from that, well, God obviously doesn't care about me because I'm going through this time. Where's God? He doesn't care. Oh, yes, He does.

Cast your cares on Him because He cares for you. Listen, going into spiritual battle, you have to be convinced that God cares for you. You got to be convinced of that. Don't let the enemy convince you otherwise. Because that's what he wants to do, because he knows that if he can get you to a place of disappointment in God, you're just going to lay down and die.

The next thing he says is: be sober-minded. And that simply means be clear thinking. And yes, it can relate to don't drink or do something that's going to cloud your mind, but listen, the opposite of sober-minded can happen many different ways, not just with alcohol. Or you can be cloudy minded because of fear.

Fear can make you cloudy minded. Focused on the things of the world can make you cloudy minded. I mean, there's a lot of things that can come in and cloud your perceptions and your understanding and your ability to think through a situation. Anger, sin, unforgiveness, can cloud your mind. I mean, there's so, so, so many things.

So the exhortation to be sober-minded is to make sure that you're in a place where you can think clearly, think biblically, not emotionally. That'll cloud your mind. Oh man, let me tell you, will that cloud your mind. Think biblically. And next thing he says is: be watchful. And that is be alert.

Be alert. You know that you're living in a world where you've got an enemy who's gunning for you. So be prepared. Don't fall asleep spiritually, but be alert. Stay alert. And then finally, the last thing that Peter tells us is: to resist the devil. And I find that there's a lot of people that don't know what that means.

They say, well, what do you mean resist the devil? Well, you know what it means to put up resistance, don't you? If somebody was trying to break into your house and you saw your front door begin to open, would you just open it and go, yeah, come on in. If you knew that it was an enemy? No, you'd push back on that door and you'd lock the thing.

That's putting up resistance. Resistance means to push back. And you and I can push back when the enemy attacks, through prayer. And we can say 'no' in the name of Jesus. There is authority, there is power in the name of Jesus Christ. He's given it to us, so use it. Resist the devil. You can. You can resist the devil.

Isn't that crazy? You know the reason for that is because puny little you is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of the living God. And puny little you has authority in the name of Jesus Christ. So he says, resist. Put up some resistance.

I love this other passage from 1 Peter, chapter 3, verse 9, where he says:

1 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Now we're not talking about the enemy. We're talking about how people may be used in your life by the enemy to bring evil. You know what you're to do to Satan. You're going to resist the devil, but what are you to do to people who are being pawns of the enemy when they bring evil into your life?

What is the expectation from scripture? Don't send evil back their way. That's what Peter's saying. Don't respond with the evil you receive from people. Because first of all, you're not supposed to even be thinking about the fact that's coming from a person. We don't battle against flesh and blood, but against those spiritual principalities and powers.

So this person who's doing this to you, your response to them is not to pay them back in kind. If they revile you, then you're not to revile them back and so forth. He says on the contrary. If somebody is cursing you, you respond with blessing. I'm sitting . . . don't . . . I'm not laughing because this is funny. I'm laughing because I can see the looks on your faces. I mean, this is hard stuff. I mean, I'm

sitting here saying this like it's easy. It's like, hey, when people are hurting, you don't hurt back. And it kind of all sounds like, yeah. Well, any spiritual person, that's what they do.

This is really tough stuff, isn't it? I mean, this is where the rubber meets the road in your Christian life. Toughest thing in the world when you see evil is to not just give it back. Because you know why? My flesh wants to, and I have to resist the flesh, not just the enemy. I got to resist the flesh now.

You have to remember something about spiritual warfare. The goal is to have victory. God's not going to give you the victory if you're consumed by the very evil that you're fighting, okay? So be very careful about that.

I've heard situations in the past where people started fighting what they knew was wrong, but they got consumed in the battle. And at the beginning of the battle, they were in the right and the other person was in the wrong. But they let their heart become so involved, and so taken over by what was happening to them, that they began to lash out in anger and frustration. And they literally began to give what they were getting.

And when that happens, God's like, okay, you're on your own. I can't bless that. I can't bless that. Yes, they were angry at you and they did wrong. But the way you responded was just as wrong. And I can't bless that. Got to be careful not to become consumed by the very thing we're fighting. Look at this passage from Matthew chapter 5. He says:

Matthew 5:43-45 (ESV)

"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."

"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. (Because you know what your father does) For he makes his sun rise on the evil (just like he does) and on the good, and sends rain on the unjust as well as those who are just. So you know, if you want to act like your Father, you really want to be Christlike. Love your enemies. Oh, mercy. We read verses like that and we're just like, gimme a break.

We haven't even gotten around to loving our brothers and sisters in Christ, and now we're told to love our enemies. We haven't even gotten to stage 1, and He wants us to jump to stage 2.

Paul echoes this in Romans chapter 12, where he says:

Romans 12:19-21 (ESV)

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, (he says,) "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." (And here's what it says:) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Good. Let good the goodness of the Lord in you overcome the evil in the other person. That's hard. That's very hard. And then in Proverbs, we're reminded what being overcome by evil looks like. And this is a great passage that says:

Proverbs 24:17-18 (ESV)

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest the LORD see it and be displeased, and turn away his anger from him.

In spiritual warfare, again, the enemy is using people in our lives to bring about his plan of evil. But when we start getting our eyes on them, and then when God responds to our prayers and they fall and we go 'Ha! They deserved it.' God's displeased. He doesn't want that attitude to be in us where we rejoice at the fall of our enemies.

These are tough things, aren't they? As we close, I've just got 2 more short final reminders about the battles that we face as believers. Once again, from Proverbs 24:

Proverbs 24:19-20 (ESV)

Fret not yourself because of evildoers, and be not envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

"*Fret not yourself because of evildoers,*" we don't use that term today, do we? If somebody's worried, I don't go 'fret not my child.' We just don't do that. What we say today is, 'dude chill.' And it really says the same thing. He says, "*Fret not yourself because of evildoers,*" in other words, when you look at all the evil that's going on in the world, and there's plenty of it to go around, he says, don't fret about it. Don't worry about it. And for whatever you don't be envious of what they have.

Don't be envious of all the things that those people have because he reminds us of something that's very important here. The evil man has no future. You do. He doesn't. And you need to understand and know that the lamp of the wicked is ultimately going to be put out, not by you, but by the Lord. And so you're to keep that in mind as you go through these kind of spiritual battles.

And we're supposed to wait on Him and don't fret and so forth. And then final reminder for Proverbs 21, simply:

Proverbs 21:31 (ESV)

...the victory belongs to the LORD.

That's an important reminder, isn't it? The victory is not yours. It's His. And He will share it with you. But you got to keep your heart right, and that means don't get overcome by evil.

Don't enter into the same junk that they're doing in your life. Don't give them what they gave you. Respond not in kind, but with kindness. And the victory belongs to the Lord. Amen. Let's stand together.

Jesus, we thank you so much for the opportunity this morning just to go through the word and to be reminded about what it says. Because Lord, we're dealing with this kind of junk every day and we see evil all around us and it's a constant reality. But Lord, you've given us ample information in Your Word about how to recognize it, the reality of evil, and then how to deal with it.

And I pray, Father God, that as your children, we would keep all these things in mind. Remember and walk in that Christlikeness. We thank you, Father, for your incredible goodness. It is in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, that we pray. And all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. If you need prayer, come on down front.