

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:5, Zechariah 8:17

Title: Lord's Table: Think no Evil

Truth: The Lord died to rescue us from our own unloving thoughts.

Date/Location: June 2, 2024 at FBC

Hymns

#276 Jesus Paid It All

#280 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed?

(Closing) #278 At Calvary

Introduction

A Japanese proverb says, "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil." It is depicted by three monkeys, one covering his eyes, one covering his ears, and one covering his mouth. An upright interpretation suggests that a person should avoid evil thoughts and deeds. That sounds good. A more worldly interpretation is that people should close their senses to evil, thus turning a blind eye or ignoring the bad things that go on around them. That is wrong.

A third interpretation has to do with simply observing evil (see and hear) or using evil speech (speak). It is difficult in this world to "see no evil" or "hear no evil" in the sense that we observe evil all around us. And we should not "speak evil" either: Mark 9:39, Acts 23:5, Titus 3:2, James 4:11, 2 Peter 2:10, 12.

Like this proverbial statement, today I want us to "think no evil."

I. Zechariah 8:16-17

¹⁶ These *are* the things you shall do:

Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;

Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;

¹⁷ **Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor;**

And do not love a false oath.

For all these *are things* that I hate,'

Says the LORD."

The meaning seems to revolve around plotting or devising schemes against your neighbor (like Prov. 10:1-19). The Lord sees the heart and does not want sin to sprout in there against other people.

Other portions of the law tell the people, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (Lev. 19:17). And Deut. 15:9 prohibits the wicked thought of withholding a loan from a fellow citizen just because the year of release is near.

Isaiah 14:13 exposes that pride arises in our hearts (also Obadiah 3). Lust is there too (Prov. 6:25). And hypocrisy (Jer. 42:20).

Hatred, money issues, pride, lust...all “thinking evil in the heart.” “As he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

II. 1 Corinthians 13:5

- ⁴ Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;
- ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, **thinks no evil; [resentful; does not count up wrongdoing; keeps no record of wrongs]**
- ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;
- ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A primary character trait explained by the apostle in this definition of sorts of love is that it thinks no evil. It does not build up a list of things to use against a person. It does not delight in supposing that the person has done wrong, or in pondering how to go after the person. It does not think the worst of people, or assume that another is doing something wrong.

When you find yourself thinking that way about another person, CHECK YOURSELF and take a reminder that love induces you to think better, more kindly, more positively, less pessimistically about another person. It does not assume that the person is malevolent. Maybe they have overlooked something. Maybe they are in a slew of despond. Maybe they are sick, or losing their hearing, or their memory, or they are preoccupied because a loved

one has walked away from Christ or is dying.

Or maybe you are too sensitive or tired, or grumpy and your thoughts about others are following your feelings in yourself. Maybe they have a point and you are in the wrong about something. Maybe you are overreacting to something that can be simply solved. Maybe you have misunderstood something!

III. Applications

- A. Have you ever thought negatively about your spouse? Devised evil? Added up wrongs done and mulled them over and over in your mind? Have you a record of those things? Have you imagined him or her doing something wrong and how you would respond with great indignation and fierceness? Have you dwelt on them leaving? Or doing something stupid while they are out and about?
- B. Have you thought evil of an (extended) family member? Stop and compare that thought process with what your mind would be like if you loved the person more wholly. Would you be praying for them instead of criticizing them in your mind? Would you be serving them instead of being sick of them? Would you be discipling them instead of writing them off to an eternity apart from Christ?
- C. Have you ever resented a fellow church member? Been angry and held it in and ruminated on it instead of talking to the person about it, alerting them to a possible issue that they did not realize, or that they needed to be told? And why? Because you *love* the person? I think not. Have you discussed the matter with everyone else *but* the person who is involved? That would be because you love yourself and making others look bad.
- D. Have you held in your heart evil thoughts of a person in politics? Have you despised Joe Biden or Donald Trump? Gretchen Whitmer or Dana Nessel? Mike Pence or Kamala Harris? Have you written social media posts critical of them? “But they are so bad, I can’t stop thinking this way about them!” They are going to be what they are going to be—and you must be what God wants you to be, so no excuses. What if Jesus were sitting next to you at the keyboard—would you have written the social media post like that?

By forwarding it, you co-sign it. Would you co-sign if Jesus were there? Would you have written at all? Or would you have bowed your head and prayed God to be honored in their lives?

Be honest. Do you have a godly concern for their souls, grief over their sin, a hope for their salvation, and a resolve not to follow their evil ways and thoughts in your own life?

What about famous people? Do you hate in your heart a person like Elon Musk? Do you covet his wealth or intellect or fame? Or spend mental energy disagreeing with his approach on Tesla or X or SpaceX or taking government subsidies?

- E. How about your parents...do you have a few choice thoughts for them that you are harboring/hiding in your heart? God sees those dark places in your mind too.
- F. The thinking of evil in your heart is a problem for the people that you think the evil against. But the real problem is within yourself. Such sin decays you from within. It destroys. It wastes your mental energy. It divides you from others, it damages fellowship, it refocuses you away from godly thoughts to evil thoughts. A pattern of thinking like this indicates a flaw in your own character, something displeasing to the Lord, something dishonoring to God, and something very unlike the Jesus you profess as Lord and Savior, in whose image God wishes to rebuild you.

Conclusion

I have been focusing on “thinking no evil” in relation to other people. There is plenty of opportunity to consider another entire avenue, and that is plain old evil thoughts related to ourselves and our own sins, not in relation to other people. But we cannot do that now.

Jesus came to rescue us from our own thoughts. He did not only pay for our sins to offer us forgiveness and a right standing with God. He also died so that we might be delivered from iniquity. And not just sin of deeds, but sins of thoughts as well. He does indeed want us to “think no evil.” With His help, we can restrain our musings about other people’s wrong and refocus on things that are godly.

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