

Series Title: Truth Unashamed, Part 5

Sermon Title: Week 5: Overcoming Evil with Good

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- **Romans 12- We've been exploring the reality that IN CHRIST there is a new kind of Life- NEW WAY OF LIVING- that is DIFFERENT from the natural human condition of the world around us, and that we were part of until we came to faith in Christ.**
- **TODAY, Paul continues describing what this new life looks like, and to help us embed this in our minds a bit more, we're going to do something different, have a little fun with this, and relate what we see here to a popular reference... specifically, MOVIE TITLES. FIRST ONE...**

#### † The Incredibles

- **When we begin to let God change us in how we think, feel, and act, our lives will become incredible.**
- **Whoa... really? INCREDIBLE? Turn to Matthew 5- sermon on the mount, we see Jesus describing an incredible kind of life, but maybe not in the way we would think...**

Matthew 5:11-12 *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

- **When we face lies, insults, when people- or just life- tries to take us out, we still possess JOY AND GLADNESS. NOTE Jesus didn't say “pretend”... no! In the difficulty of life, in response to attacks, we may actively rejoice and be glad. THAT IS AN INCREDIBLE KIND OF LIFE. We aren't joyful and glad that life is hard, but our joy and gladness – our REWARD- comes from something GREATER than anything life can throw at us, and so overcomes the hardship we face.**
- **THIS KIND OF LIFE IS WHAT PAUL IS DESCRIBING here in R12. I think Paul might have had Jesus' words in mind when he said- from verse 14- BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU. When people come against you, demean you, even just irritate you- SINCERELY desire God's best for them.**
- **NOW, TODAY- Paul takes this- explores it further- it's important that he does, because this dynamic- difficulty- emotions we deal with in relating to people in conflict- is one of the most common dynamics we face as human beings, AND one with most potential to lead to harm, and just make us miserable.**
- **SO, when we are faced with hostility- being transformed IN CHRIST, how do we respond? DO NOT REPAY EVIL FOR EVIL.... NEXT MOVIE...**

#### † The Empire Strikes Back

<sup>17</sup> *Do not repay anyone evil for evil.*

- **When someone strikes you, we don't strike back. Before you groan too much... climactic scene- Luke is fighting emperor... Emperor is torturing him, tempting him to respond in kind- to strike back- this is the turning point for Luke in the entire story- whether or not he succumbs to evil ALL came to how he would respond right here... and he doesn't repay evil for evil.**
- **BUT WHY? Isn't it just? Isn't it fair? If someone hurts us, to hurt them back? To really make this personal, we need to rephrase the word 'evil'... not just super bad things.**
  - **Don't repay a lie with a lie. Snide comment with...**
  - **insult with... being cheated with cheating**

- *Don't justify our bad behavior by someone else's bad behavior.*
- **THIS IS SO IMPORTANT** because without this ethic, relationships, families, society... will not survive.
- **To repay evil with evil-** to give a person what 'they've got coming'- to reply 'in kind' is one of the most basic instincts of the human condition- what the NT calls our **FLESH**. But **IN CHRIST**, we no longer have to live under the control of our flesh, because we have the **CHOICE** to live with our mind surrendered to the leadership of the **SPIRIT**.
- **When we are living by the Spirit-** the controlling influence in our lives is our relationship with Jesus, not our own strength, we can take the next step, which takes us to the **NEXT MOVIE...**

### ✠ Mission Impossible

*Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.*

- **Be careful-** means be proactive, give great thought and purpose- to do what?
- **This is subtle, but very important.** ON ONE HAND, Paul could be saying, live in such a way that everyone approves of what you do. But this has real problems, because we live in a fallen world, and approval of the world around us can often run counter to God. **WE KNOW THIS.**
- **But even more basic, you could make Paul out here to be arguing for performance based acceptance-** as long as people approve of me, I'm good. **BUT THIS IS NOT** what Paul is saying
- **Rather, God here is calling us to purposefully live out the implications of WHO HE IS in our life-** to **BE AWARE** of how our lives- actions- impact those around us, even those against us! There are few things that everyone agrees are **RIGHT**, even if they don't practice them. But on this short list are **KINDNESS. PATIENCE. FORGIVENESS. HONESTY. COURAGE. COMPASSION. HUMILITY. RESPECT** given, even when it is not received.
- **Simply put, the fruit of the spirit and the attributes of God's love in how we live. BECAUSE of Spirit...**
- **It's NOT mission impossible! NEXT MOVIE....**

### ✠ Mission Impossible II

<sup>18</sup> *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

- **Remember the context here!** Paul is speaking into the assumption that we **WILL** experience conflict and hostility. This doesn't assume a perfect world, but an imperfect reality. **AND, in the midst of our reality, because of WHO WE ARE** as forgiven, redeemed, **SET FREE** followers of Christ, as much as it is **UP TO US**, how **WE** choose to live, **LET US LIVE IN PEACE.**
- **Practical implications!**
  - **It's not always possible!** This isn't a call to be a doormat, or compromise our values, our integrity, just to avoid conflict. It also doesn't mean that we turn a blind eye to injustice and harm to another.
  - **IT does mean WE will never be the ones to take the initiative in disturbing the peace.** Our hearts desire is to live in harmony with the world around us, to value and respect people, to be at **PEACE.**
  - **UNLESS** we are provoked where we must take a stand, and then we do so with a heart seeking redemption, **NOT SEEKING REVENGE.**
- **This leads to NEXT MOVIE... This Friday the big release... Avengers Endgame... HERE, Paul calls us, when faced with conflict, to take time to consider...**

### ✠ The Avenger's Endgame

<sup>19</sup> *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

- **Revenge. This is paying evil for evil, but with passion. Feels good in the moment, but leads to destruction. Why is desire for revenge so seductive?**
- **Think... If my identity, my foundation, is just ME- my emotions about myself- and someone harms me, they are chipping away at WHO I AM. What do I have to do? DEFEND MYSELF. BUILD MYSELF BACK UP- They took from me, I have to take back from them!**
- **Sometimes we want to do this actively. Tell somebody off. Make them feel our pain**
- **OR, we do it passively. Lie in bed and fantasize about what we would say, or do. Write that email we delete. IT FEELS SO RIGHT, SO GOOD... except that it makes us miserable, and can lead us into actions with long lasting harm.**
- **OR, THERE IS ANOTHER DOOR. This is where our identity, WHO WE ARE, is rooted in our faith in GOD- WHO WE ARE in Christ! So when someone harms us**
- **GOD! Im giving my hurt, my offendedness.. to you. GIVING YOU TIME. PRAY. LORD- give me wisdom... let me see this person as you see them (and see MYSELF...) BY FAITH I put them in YOUR HANDS, for the work you may do in THEIR LIFE.**
- **Maybe boundaries? Sure. Wise decision about situation. You bet. Passive doormats? Not at all.**
- **BUT Revenge? Not us. We take that need for payback and we give it to God, thanking him that we are WHOLE because of HIM.**
- **THEN, what does God do? What is his wrath, how does he avenge? Paul quotes from DEUT 32- frightening picture of God's wrath against enemies of his people. Against sin. What has God done with his wrath... CROSS. JESUS.**
- **God, in his time, will make all things just. We can truly trust him. AND HIS ENDGAME, shown to us on the cross, is MERCY. REDEMPTION. FREEDOM.**
- **He has given this gift to US, even when WE WERE his enemies (Rom 5:10). AND He calls us to give this gift of mercy and redemption to OTHERS.**
- **HOW? Last movie...**

#### ✠ A Simple Plan

- **Bill Paxton, BB Thornton... worst of human nature. God's simple plan is that we show HIS NATURE**

<sup>20</sup> On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

- **Desire, and DO, what is best for our enemy. WHY WOULD WE DO THIS? TO WHAT END?**
- **Here Paul gives fascinating, and often misunderstood picture...**

*In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

- **Growing up... 'kill them with kindness'... oh sure, I'll be nice, but I'm being nice so I can make you miserable! NO!**
- **Biblical era... 'burning coals' was way of showing repentance.**
- **WE ARE KIND, WE LOVE, BECAUSE THAT IS MOST POWERFUL WAY to show a person who God is, and their NEED for God. We show kindness to our enemy, because our desire to make them our friend!**
- **When YOU are the one who does harm, and the other person is patient and kind in return... We feel horrible! GOD USES THAT TO CONVICT US, to shape us, to draw us closer to HIM.**
- **IDEA in Christianity that we need to push 'world' towards repentance by shunning them. YOU are a sinner, I want nothing to do with you. NO! God calls us to LOVE, ENGAGE, to overcome EVIL, SIN, BROKENNESS, PAIN... WITH GOOD.**

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- *Paul's point is that to be overcome by evil... is to repay evil for evil. To seek revenge, because when we do this, we simply increase the hurt, the harm, the evil in our world. TO RETALIATE is to be overcome, not to win.*
- *INSTEAD, we respond with the INCREDIBLE- the miraculous power, of GOODNESS.*
- *When we react in our flesh- what man will do. Hurt.*
- *When we respond with GOOD... what God can do*