

Dear Friends and Family,

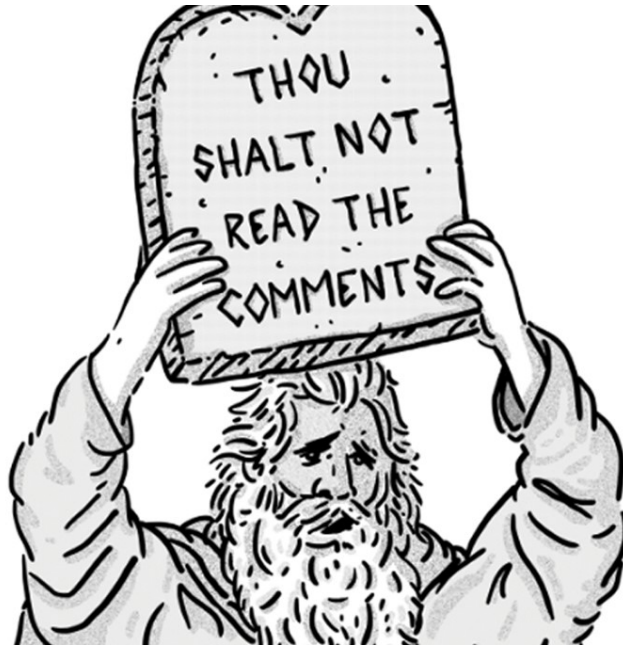
I was thrilled to receive so many responses to my question last week. I pray that you studied God's word and spent time deep in thought about it. To refresh, the question was: Why has Satan not been destroyed? Why is he allowed to rule this world?

Understanding evil is a topic long studied and debated throughout history. Please read the following knowing that it touches on this expansive topic as thoroughly and succinctly as possible.

This week, we pick up our study from last week. A brief review:

1. There are three major pericopes of God's wrath: The Fall, The Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah
2. Why these three? Because Scripture lumps them together (2 Peter 2:4-10 & Jude 6-7)
3. Previously, we examined the similarities between The Flood and Sodom and Gomorrah

4. Last week, we studied The Fall of the Angels.
 5. This week, we will examine The Fall of Man.
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If you've spent time on social media, you've probably heard the expression, "Don't read the comments." But that's not really possible, is it? We have to read the comments; we love the affirmation that comes with 'likes', 'loves' and 'shares'. However, those positive affirmations also come alongside the negative. The negative comments often virtually abuse and twist words and bring trouble to the conversation. There has been a significant rise in vehement, violent, and divisive language in the comments section. Why is this?

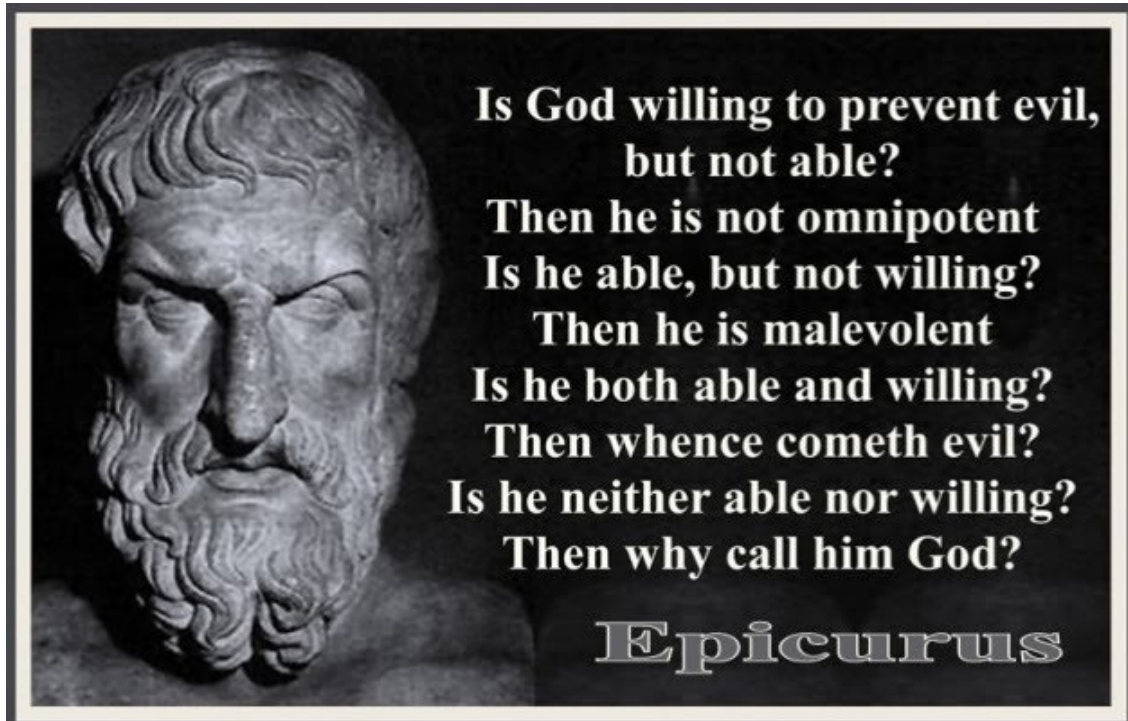
In a recent article published by [The Biblical Recorder](#), entitled *We've Been Hacked*, author Chris Martin states,

In 2018, an internal investigation at Facebook reported, "Our algorithms exploit the human brain's attraction to divisiveness." ... Facebook's own employees reported that its algorithm - the secret mathematical equation developed to determine what you see when you open Facebook - is designed to serve you "more and more divisive content in an effort to gain user attention & increase time on the platform." ... Facebook knows that the most reliable way to keep you scrolling is to make you mad. Divisive content leads to more engagement than unifying content.

So the negative comments are intentional! Why? Why would the human brain

have an attraction to divisiveness rather than unity? Especially considering the heart of our maker? Consider what we know about God:

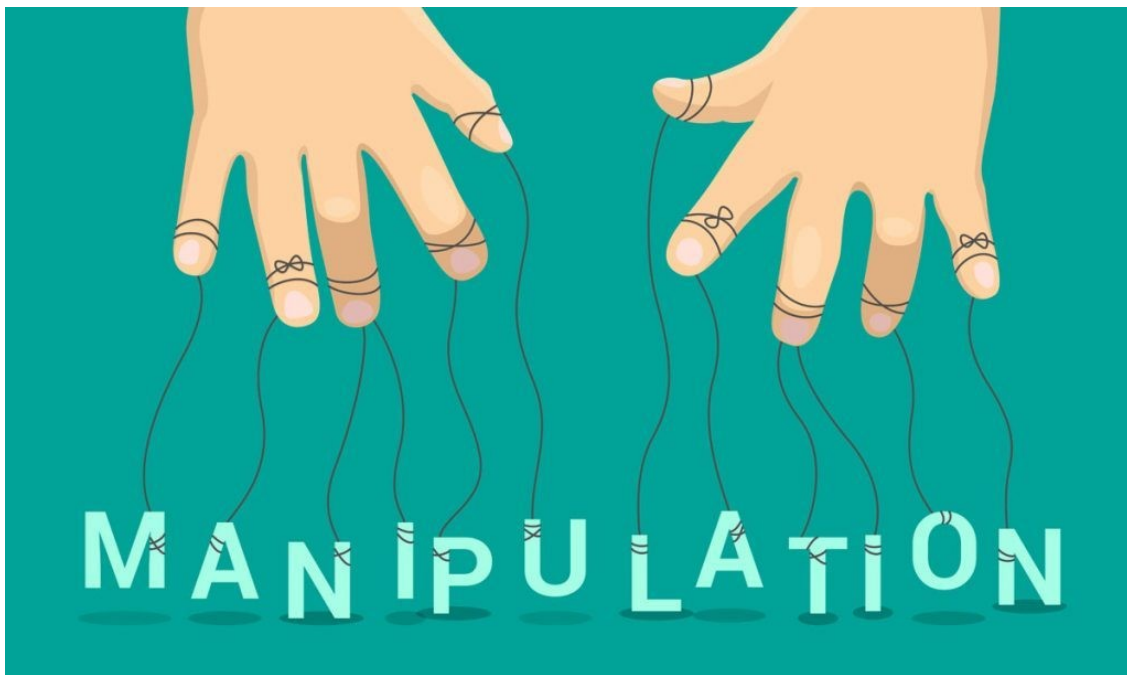
- God is Love (1 John 4:7-8)
- God is Omnipotent (Job 42:2)
- God is Good (Luke 18:19)
- We are made in God's Image (Gen. 1:26)



These scriptural truths make the question even more difficult to answer. This conundrum is what theologians have called the *Problem of Evil*. If God is all Scripture claims He is, He cannot be the author or creator of evil. Yet, evil exists. Why and more to the point, how?

Recall from last week that Lucifer, in his pre-fallen state, was in the garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:13). Scripture does not give us a timeline of how long he was in Eden, if and when he interacted with Adam and Eve, or exactly when he fell. What it does tell us is that *after* he fell, he came to Eden to tempt man to sin.

Turn your attention to Genesis 3. Here we read immediately that Lucifer is no longer Lucifer, but he is the serpent (Revelation 12:7-12). Remember from last week that Satan's desire is to be like God. He played on that desire to confuse and manipulate Eve. Read Satan's lie from Genesis 3:5 "For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and **you will become like God**, knowing good and evil."

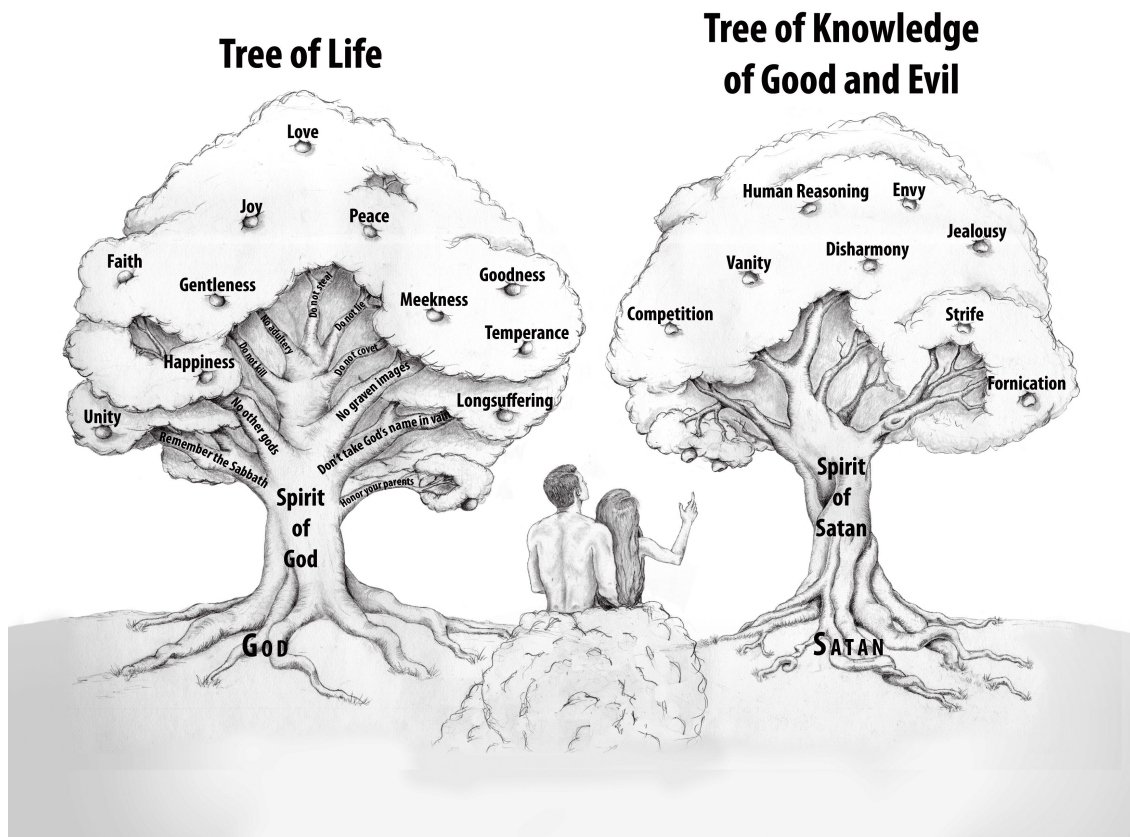


This lie was in fact true to some extent. See God's response to this in Genesis 3:22 "Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has **become like one of Us**, knowing good and evil; and now, he might reach out with his hand, and take fruit also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever". It is not that Adam and Eve became God-like. Instead, they acquired, first hand, knowledge that was previously hidden from them yet known to God, the knowledge of good and evil. And in their decision, they committed evil, for they disobeyed the Word of God and instead followed after the temptation of Satan.

Consider this definition of manipulation: *to control or play upon by artful, unfair, or insidious means especially to one's own advantage.*

Now, consider this definition as you read the exchange in Genesis 3:1-7. Take note of how Satan manipulated the situation by:

1. Asking a cunning question
 2. Making a bold, untrue statement
 3. Following up with a perverted truth claim
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The question that remains then is this: **What advantage did Satan realize in the fall of man?** Addressing this question also alludes to answering our question from last week and why Satan is allowed to continue his reign over this world.

Read Genesis 2:4-9 & 15-17.

- What two trees stood in the midst of the garden?
- What tree was man forbidden to eat from?
- What consequence would occur if he ate of it?

Consider the following thought experiment. God, in His infinite wisdom and complete sovereignty, created two classes of beings, Angels and Humans. Angels were NOT created in His image, instead they were created in the image of instruments of worship. They did however, intrinsically have the knowledge of good and evil, how else could Satan and his angels fall from glory? There is no recorded commandment given to the angels like the one given to man to not eat of the Tree. Instead, Scripture says of Satan's sin, that he "said in his heart...I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:13-14). Contrasting this, man WAS made in the image of God, but with no knowledge of good and evil.

Prior to the fall in the garden, man had no fear of death, pain or suffering; he worked keeping and tending the garden but did not "toil by the sweat of his brow" (Gen.

3:17-19); and perhaps most memorable, he had no shame in his nakedness (Gen. 2:25 & 3:7).

This difference in creation is of paramount importance. As image bearers of God, we are afforded the gift of God's grace. Compare 2 Peter 2:4 and 1 Peter 1:10-12. Notice that our salvation is a mystery to angels and that God did not provide a means for the redemption for angels. Why was humanity given a path to salvation but not the angels? It is all centered on *Imago Dei*, we bear the image of God.

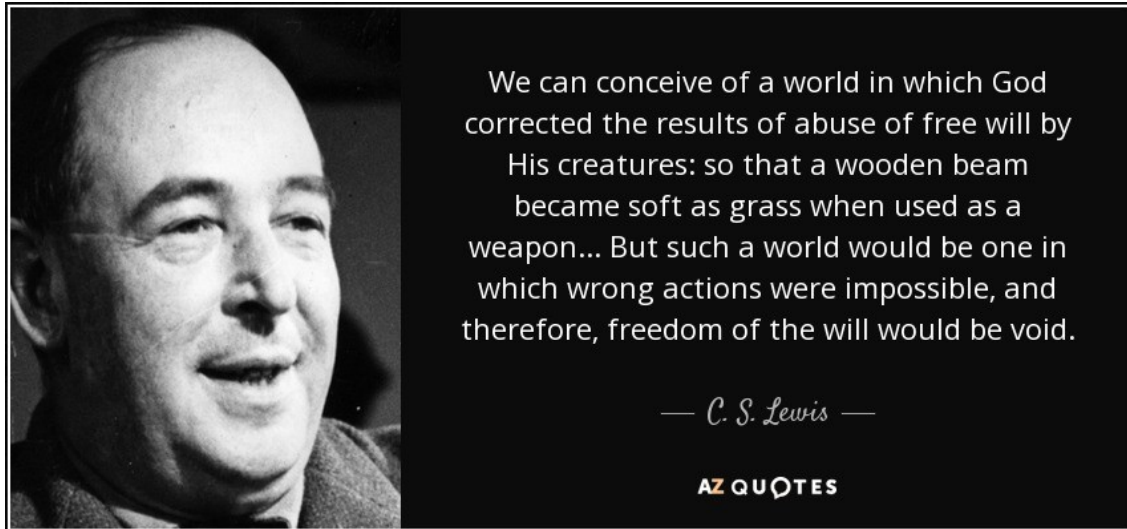


Now turn to Hebrews 2:14-18. Take further note that God does not give help to angels, AND Christ has been made like his brethren. Let that sink in for a moment. Satan's sole desire is to be like God. He lied to Eve telling her she would be like God only if she knew good and evil. However, God had already made man in His likeness. Furthermore, after the fall, God states that man is like Him in knowing good and evil. But then, here comes Jesus, the eternal second member of the trinity, appearing on earth to become like us! Focus specifically on Hebrews 2:18. Christ, in His humanity, like us, was tempted and suffered, in order that He could come to our aid.

Oh how I wish that we had never fallen into sin. However, consider that if we had not, if we had no knowledge of good and evil, if Satan did not prowl around like a roaring lion, Jesus would have never come, and we would have no knowledge of the fullness of God's love for us.

There is a great deal to understand about the knowledge of good and evil in answering the problem of evil.

We were created in the image and likeness of God, sharing His desire to live in relationship. We were created to be unified, not divisive. However, when sin entered the world, it forever marred that relationship. Just look at the curse found in Genesis 3:16-19.



Evil exists not because God created it. Evil exists because it is a logically necessary symptom of creating truly free moral agents. In order for us to have free will, we must have the choice to freely deny God's goodness, hence evil. Satan desires for humanity to reject God as he himself has. He aims to pervert God's love and justice to his own means and continues twisting truth, causing division and confusion. His ultimate goal is to steal worship from God for himself and humanity serves as a means to that end. We are also tainted by the sin of generations of our forefathers and we also choose, regularly, to deny what is good and cling to what is evil.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. - Galatians 4:4-7

Through God's grace and providence, He provided a way for humanity to restore our relationship with Him. When we enter into a saving relationship, knowing Christ as our personal Savior, our desires become more like His, our actions lead

us toward Him. We literally decide to FOLLOW HIM. However, do not ignore the allure of sin. God warns about the pervasive ways of sin, many times in the Bible, comparing it to someone knocking on your door.

As believers, we know that evil exists. We should be adamantly opposed to it, but many instead embrace it. Why is this? I will challenge you again this week! Consider this question and dig deep into Scripture. May God work through the Spirit to bring His truth into understanding.

Grace and Peace to you all!

Pastor Matt

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Dr. Matthew Long

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*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us **RUN** with endurance the race that is set before us -- Hebrews 12:1*

