**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**AWAKE Participants**

 **Ephesians 5: 11 - 16**

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November 14th In the Year of Our Lord - (Anno Domini A.D.) 2021

(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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 We can group verses 11- 16 together into seven items Paul is addressing. All seven address *unfruitful deeds of darkness* or *evil,* and by extension. . . *sin*. Many in our society shy away from calling people’s actions and statements *evil*. *Evil* is associated with the word “*sin*”. Both of these words call for a moral judgement which places the cause of the *evil* and *sin* to be in an examining critical spotlight. And, who is the cause of *evil* and *sin*? The short answer. . . is that *evil* and *sin* are offered by the Devil all the time. We see this with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3).

*Evil* and *sin* only exist because people choose to do them. People choose to comply with Satan’s offers. God created His creation giving people the ability to choose Him and His ways (Genesis 2:17). God does not produce *evil* and *sin*, people do. This possible *evil*/*sinful* ability automatically affords people to choose to have actions and thoughts contrary to God. Producing *evil* and *sin* in action and thought creates an impact upon people that opposes God’s plan and will for their life. *Evil* and *sin* affect both the people producing them and those that are victimized by them. Here is what Paul told the Ephesians.

 **11** Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness,

but instead, even expose them;

**12** for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things

which are done by them in secret.

**13** But all things become visible

when they are exposed by the light,

for everything that becomes visible is light.

**14** For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper,

And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you."

**15** Therefore be careful how you walk,

not as unwise men but as wise,

 **16** making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Reviewing these verses, we can see seven items Paul delineates to his audience his concern about *unfruitful deeds of darkness* or *evil*.

1. Do not participate with *evil*: v. 11

 2. Expose *evil*: v. 11, 13

 3. Do not gossip about *evil*: v.12

 4. God’s light exposes *evil*: v. 13

 5. Be “Awake” – Pay attention to what is happening around you: v.14

 6. Walk carefully: v. 14

 7. The days are *evil*: v. 16

Western Society has produced definitions for *evil* detailed in publications like Webster’s Dictionary. Proof that main-stream Western culture believes that *evil* exists. . . by the fact that one of their leading dictionaries (online) has a definition for *evil*.

**Webster’s Dictionary definition of evil.**

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/evil

1 a: morally reprehensible: SINFUL, WICKED - an evil impulse

b: arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct

a person of evil reputation

2 a: archaic: INFERIOR

b: causing discomfort or repulsion: OFFENSIVE

c: DISAGREEABLE - woke late and in an evil temper

3 a: causing harm: PERNICIOUS - the evil institution of slavery

b: marked by misfortune: UNLUCKY

Evil used as a noun

1 a: the fact of suffering, misfortune, and wrongdoing

b: a cosmic evil force

2: something that brings sorrow, distress, or calamity

**Why do I need to make this point?** Because there are those *agnostic* and *atheistic* *human secularists* who are hard at work trying to not only rewrite but erase God and His Word. To them, there is not such a thing as *evil* or *sin*. They teach that everything is subjective to the individual, that personal choices only stem from the individual controlling their own actions and statements, that there is not any moral wrong or right. People can carry-out their actions and statements upon others because they have the will and power to do so. People can impose their will upon others as a product of *survival of the fittest*.

We see this carried-out with Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party who murdered millions of people when they had the power to carry-out their beliefs. Stalin, in the U.S.S.R. (Russia), did the same. History is replete with these tyrants. There were more people murdered by atheists and agnostics who believed in Darwinian Evolution’s *survival of the fittest* in the 20th century than all the previous centuries.

The Nazi party fulfilled the teachings of their own German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900) who was a participant promoter of the Age of Enlightenment. Nietzsche is the man that said and published that “God is dead”.

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?”

With this statement. . . in the context of the Age of Enlightenment, when European philosophers found that there was not any need of a God, due to an imparting reliance upon Darwin’s publications. . . which provided to atheistic academia the science to proclaim that there was not any need for a God of creation (God of the Bible) since life and the world in which we lived was not created but evolved from random undirected processes. With this acceptance, Nietzsche made the observation that mankind has philosophized God out of their way. Modern Western humanity can live without the need or want of a God that provided a framework for ordered life. Why seek or turn to God that does not exist? Many see that Nietzsche prophesied what would come. In fact, he was correct. The 20th century produced more wars on a global scale and produced more deaths than in previous human history. There was not any need to love God or your neighbor to fulfill a person’s or people’s own selfish ambitions.

So, with this understanding of what has happened under the influence of the Age of Enlightenment, we receive Paul’s letter to the Ephesians with an understanding of what *evil* looks like and what *evil* does. *Evil* was the same then as it is now. *Evil* at work in a person creates the desire to commit death and destruction of God’s creation. Unfortunately, Paul is concerned that his friends in Ephesus have not fully surrendered their lives to God. Therefore, they are susceptible to have *evil* work in them.

We can see that Paul either has a low expectation of his associates in Ephesus or he thinks they are simpletons. . . in that they can be dupped or easily led astray by *evil* people. Paul continues to paint a picture of people that made some kind of commitment to God but are still participating, to some degree, with the fallen world from which they came. However, this is not any different from the historical transition people have made to be a disciple of God. We look around us today and we see the same situation. We live in a world where good is called bad and *evil* is accepted.

**Isaiah 5:20-23**

20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!

 21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!

 22 Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink,

 23 Who justify the wicked for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!

**Proverbs 17:15** He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

Time does not permit us to reflect at length upon each one of these. However, we will make some general observations.

1. Do not participate with *evil*: v. 11

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**So, what is *evil*? I say that *evil* is anything that opposes God.**

We noted the “current” online Webster Dictionary’s definition of *evil*. However, this version of Webster’s dictionary does not associate *evil* as opposed to God or assign *evil* to the Devil. How did the 1832 Webster’s dictionary define *evil*? Most people do not know that Noah Webster also published an English Bible in 1833. Noah Webster was a Christian and correctly defined words without political correctness or influence from Enlightened philosophers of his time.

**1832 Webster’s Dictionary**

**E'VIL**, adjective e'vl. [Heb. to be unjust or injurious, to defraud.]

**1.** Having bad qualities of a natural kind; mischievous; having qualities which tend to injury, or to produce mischief.

Some evil beast hath devoured him. [Genesis 37:20](http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/evil).

**2.** Having bad qualities of a moral kind; wicked; corrupt; perverse; wrong; as evil thoughts; evil deeds; evil speaking; an evil generation.

**3.** Unfortunate; unhappy; producing sorrow, distress, injury or calamity; as evil tidings; evil arrows; evil days.

**E'VIL**, **noun**evil is natural or moral. Natural evil is any thing which produces pain, distress, loss or calamity, or which in any way disturbs the peace, impairs the happiness, or destroys the perfection of natural beings.

Moral evil is any deviation of a moral agent from the rules of conduct prescribed to him by God, or by legitimate human authority; or it is any violation of the plain principles of justice and rectitude.

There are also evils called civil, which affect injuriously the peace or prosperity of a city or state; and political evils, which injure a nation, in its public capacity.

All wickedness, all crimes, all violations of law and right are moral evils. Diseases are natural evils, but they often proceed from moral evils.

**2.** Misfortune; mischief; injury.

There shall no evil befall thee. Psalms 91:10.

A prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself. Proverbs 22:3.

**3**. Depravity; corruption of heart, or disposition to commit wickedness; malignity.

The heart of the sons of men is full of evil Ecclesiastes 9:3.

**4**. Malady; as the king's evil or scrophula.

**E'VIL, adverb** [generally contracted to ill.]

**1.** Not well; not with justice or propriety; unsuitable. Evil it beseems thee.

**2.** Not virtuously; not innocently.

**3.** Not happily; unfortunately. It went evil with his house.

4. Injuriously; not kindly. The Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us.

In composition, evil denoting something bad or wrong, is often contracted to ill.

<http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/evil>

Our society receives the word “*evil*” as a strong indicting word, like *sin*. We live in a society where the culture teaches that no one should be held accountable for their personal moral choices. Therefore, it is easy for people, especially young people, to accept *evil* as an okay thing to do. In the 1960’s, we remember the cultural phrase, “*if it feels good – do it*”. There was a song with the lyrics. . *. if you’re not with the one you love - then love the one you’re with*”; reminiscent of what took place at “Woodstock” (August - 1969). We adults who lived during that era know what took place. The musical festival Woodstock was the Poster-Child-Event that placed a punctuation mark on the full rebellion against God and His Word. Woodstock was the epicenter of Drug-Sex-&-Rock and Roll that had engulfed teens in the mid-1960’s.

 If anyone doubts the affects this era inflicted upon America . . . we need not look any further than Bill Clinton who was a product Poster-Child himself of the times (born 1946) . . . from draft-dodging to “*I did not inhale*” (reference to not smoking marijuana) – to a liaison with a White House intern, which was one of many women victimized by Slick Willy; William Jefferson Clinton represented the *moral malaise* of the American voting majority and was elected twice to the Presidency. There were many reports from Arkansas warning the American voter about Clinton’s affairs before he was elected the first time. Those that voted for Bill participated in *evil*.

**Voters who voted for America’s current occupant of the White House participate with *evil*.**

**In conclusion**, many people do not see that they participate in *evil* by their vote and passive participation in societies climate of secular entertainment where anything goes. We all most likely need to reflect upon our media viewing. Believers have an obligation under God’s Word to expose *evil*. However, many are spiritually too weak to stand-up for God’s ways or have compromised their witness due to their own failings.

I do see that many of us are “awake” and are paying attention. We are grieved by what we see in our lifetime. From pedophilia committed by trusted Priests to Jimmy Swaggart’s (T.V. Evangelist) sex scandals to Jim Baker’s (T.V. Charismatic leader) financial fraud, the Church is seemingly engulfed in *evil* and *sin.*

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I do not want to end this sermon on a down beat. The Good News is. . . The Great News is. . . that you and I can do something about our lives and our relationships. We can take care of our business and be God’s light.

 One way to expose dark behavior is to just be your Christian self. Others will see the difference, and, by your actions and statements, you will highlight the Good-News-Life. Praise God!

**Matthew 5:14-16**

 14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

AMEN