

Audio Transcript of Sermon

July 18, 2026

The Two Trees

Hello. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Tom Laign with Sabbath Bible Study. I find myself mostly shopping for groceries at the same store, and like many people, I shop there because it is convenient for me and tends to offer the best prices. While shopping for groceries, there are some items that will always be a specific name brand, and other items I will find the best deal. Some items come in different size packaging, and at the store I shop at, in addition to the item price, they give a unit price. For instance, if an item is sold in ounces, in addition to the item price, they will give you the cost per ounce, and I find that helpful when buying. Sometimes the bigger items cost less per unit, but not always. I think where I live people must be bored with food, because there is an entire aisle of condiments, dressings, pickled things, and salad fixings. Ketchup and mayonnaise are no longer just ketchup and mayonnaise. One can buy flavored varieties in many different shapes and colors.

Shopping for bread can sometimes be an adventure. There are the different brands and varieties, and with bread, I tend to buy the same brand and variety. The hunt for me is about the expiration date. I've noticed the easiest to grab loaf tends to have the closest expiration date, and that if I dig around a bit in the display, I can find a better expiration date.

The grocery store is a place I visit many times a month, and sometimes more than once a week. I tend to visit stores selling other types of items less, but I use similar ideas. For instance, before I buy a vehicle, I am going to understand the fuel mileage and what gas will cost, along with insurance costs. I'd be fine with an electric vehicle, but so far, I haven't been able to make financial sense out of it. I do have solar panels on my roof and in the desert southwest they make sense for me. These are paid for and provide electricity to the house during my retirement. With electric costs going up and extreme heat where I live, I do not worry when the electric company tells me I am projected to use eighty percent more from the grid this month, because I know how little I paid last month, all while keeping cool with my refrigerated air conditioning system.

The most overwhelmed I felt when shopping was when I last got new eyeglasses. I asked to see something in a gold wire frame, and then came face to face with what seemed like thousands of choices. I don't know what your experiences are in shopping, but I like to keep things simple.

Sometimes when shopping, I come across locked display cases. Sometimes these locked display cases hold small and valuable electronic gadgets like cell phones, but I have seen locked display cases hold razor blades and in liquor and wine stores, higher cost items. Interestingly, there is a relatively inexpensive brand of cognac that I see locked up at many of these stores. There is more expensive cognac on the shelf, but this inexpensive brand is locked up for reasons that make sense to the store.

The choices we make in monthly shopping and even larger purchases can be overwhelming. How much easier would it be if we had a simpler set of choices to decide between. Imagine how easy it would be to buy ice cream at the store, if there were only two flavors. That might be a boring set of choices, just two flavors of ice cream, but it would simplify the decision making process. Imagine if clothes came in only two colors, or if there were only two types of vehicles to buy for your family. The choices would be boring, and everyone would have nearly the same things. Now imagine if one of those two choices came with bad reviews. One bad review might not keep me from buying something if all of the other reviews were very good, but many bad reviews would make me reexamine my choices. The exception to that is if I know who is making the review. For instance if the one bad review among many positive reviews is somebody I know and whose opinion I value, I will probably lean heavily on their review even though it is isolated.

So imagine you find yourself in a location with many varieties on display, but only two featured varieties, and a strong review to absolutely stay away from one of the two featured varieties, to never, ever, under any circumstance to even touch that one variety and we got that review from a very reliable source that we should trust. It would seem like it would be a very easy choice to make. We could choose any variety unless it had a bad review, and if we really wanted to focus attention on the two featured varieties, from a very reliable source, one of the featured varieties we would not even touch because it had a very bad review. We would absolutely avoid that one variety. That's what happened to Adam when he

found himself in the Garden of Eden. God pointed out all of the trees and told him they were good for food, and then featured in the garden were two trees, the Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and God told Adam to not eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil because if he did so, it would result in death.

Having previously worked in food service while preparing to be a teacher, the rule was, if in doubt throw it out. In the case of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, death was promised by God. Adam didn't have the luxury of going through a food service food safety course like I did, but if I am in a garden setting and somebody who is knowledgeable tells me not to eat the fruit of a plant or tree because I will die, I'm going to take that at face value. Ultimately, Eve and then Adam decided to trust a serpent more than God, and while eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil did not kill Eve and Adam at that time, since that time all people are subject to death. Along with taxes, death is one of the certainties of life. Let's read the account in Genesis two verse eight.

Genesis 2:8-17

8. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed.

9. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

10. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads.

11. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;

12. And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone.

13. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia.

14. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.

15. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Because Adam and Even ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, physical death was their reality along with the ability to do anything good and anything evil. Because God already had the experience of Lucifer's rebellion where Lucifer became Satan the adversary where one-third of the angels became demons, God did not want mankind to have an eternal existence when evil was a possibility by also taking of the Tree of Life, so God kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and protected the garden with Cherubim holding flaming swords. Genesis three verse twenty-two.

Genesis 3:22-24

22. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever:

23. Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

24. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The trees in the middle of the Garden of Eden were the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Each of these trees presented a different pathway forward. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil gave knowledge of both good and evil. When thousands of years later the apostle Paul lamented that he found himself doing those things he would not do and not doing those things he would do, Paul like all of us was talking about the impact of the choice made to partake of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil by Adam and Eve. All of us struggle between what is good and evil because of that choice, and we must choose good over evil.

We do not know what became of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil or the Tree of Life. We do not know what fruit was born by these trees or if they are even found on Earth today. The flood during Noah's time could have destroyed these trees. We do know that when New Jerusalem is established and the pure river of water of life flows from the throne of God our Father and Jesus Christ,

that on either side of that river will be found the Tree of Life. From the description we can see that the Tree of Life always has ripe fruit, and that the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Revelation twenty-two verse one.

Revelation 22:1-5

- 1. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.**
- 2. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**
- 3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:**
- 4. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.**
- 5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.**

The Greek word for healing is the same word from which we get the word therapy today. When we think of therapy today, we think of an ongoing series of treatments to provide medical or emotional care. I've often wondered how different history would be if Adam and Eve had rejected the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and solely chosen the Tree of Life, but I suppose we will need to wait until the return of Jesus to understand what could have been. Since that fateful choice by Adam and Eve, good and evil have been part of the human experience, and often the human experience confuses good with evil and evil with good. Isaiah described that as a woe along with other actions.

Like so many I live in a neighborhood where my neighbor's house is just feet away from my house. In some locations such as with apartments and row houses, neighbors are found on the other side of an interior wall. Isaiah describes this type of housing as a woe, something that while we think it makes sense today, is described as being on the side of evil, because why would anything that is good be a woe? Isaiah five verse eight.

Isaiah 5:8-23

- 8. Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!**

9. In mine ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant.

10. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.

Another woe, or evil, that impacts a person is when they live to get drunk. Most people wake up to go to work, or take care of people and chores around the house. It is evil when people get up to get drunk. Instead of being motivated by family or work, these people just want to escape reality by drinking. If today it is not alcohol, it is some type of drug. Isaiah also shows that when a society begins to escape reality this way they go into captivity because while escaping reality they also forget about God. Verse eleven.

11. Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them!

12. And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.

13. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst.

14. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

15. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled:

16. But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

17. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

Another type of evil comes from those who seek to parade evil around as if it were good, all while proclaiming they are doing good. Verse eighteen.

18. Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope:

19. That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!

Isaiah shows it is evil when evil is called good and good is called evil, because it brings confusion to truth. Verse twenty.

20. Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

There are some who trust themselves more than God, and see themselves as wise and prudent. This is also a type of evil. Verse twenty-one.

21. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

Finally, Isaiah describes as evil those who drink to the point, they justify what the wicked do and criticize what the righteous do. Verse twenty-two.

22. Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink:

23. Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

In Amos, we see God imploring Israel to seek Him so that they could live, and then God went on to show how wrong Israel was in its thinking. They turned justice into something bitter, and forgot about righteousness. It's like Israel had a warped idea of what was right to the point where what they thought was right was hard to swallow and filled with evil. God reminded them that positions of political strength can be reversed showing that those who Israel once dominated would now dominate Israel. He added that Israel had sunk so low as a society that anyone who tried to remind Israel of what they needed to do to be right with God was hated. Israel had become a nation that would easily take food from the hungry and poor and consequently would not enjoy the houses they built or drink of the wine of their vineyards. Even those in society who seemed upright were easily bribed, and all of this happening in a time when evil is so pervasive that for the prudent it is easier to say nothing. As bad as Israel was during this prophecy,

God urged them to seek good and not evil, to hate the evil and love the good, so that justice, God's justice could be available to the people. Amos five verse seven.

Amos 5:7-15

- 7. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,**
- 8. Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name:**
- 9. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.**
- 10. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.**
- 11. Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them.**
- 12. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.**
- 13. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.**
- 14. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.**
- 15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.**

Micah was a prophet to Judah and Jerusalem and also wrote of the corruption happening there. After rhetorically asking if it was the place of civil leaders to administer justice, he told them they hated what was good and loved what was evil, even cruel deaths. He told them they were being led astray by false prophets who proclaimed peace while seeking their destruction. Because Judah and Jerusalem wanted to believe the lie instead of the truth, God allowed them to be blinded and told them it would become obvious that the false prophets they trusted would be discovered as liars because it would be easy to see that God was not listening to them. Micah three verse one.

Micah 3:1-8

- 1. And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?**
- 2. Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones;**
- 3. Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron.**
- 4. Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.**
- 5. Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him.**
- 6. Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them.**
- 7. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.**
- 8. But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.**

Malachi, whose message is primarily written to priests, shows that God is annoyed when He is blamed when people suffer the consequences of sin and when God is described as being complicit in sin. All of us are children of God and as children of God we need to make sure we are doing what God expects of us. Nothing good will result by blending other religions in with Christianity, because the practices of that other religion will gradually become more and more prominent. With God, doing this religiously is like when a husband cheats on his wife. The longer that affair lasts the more time will be given to the other woman without regard to the impact on the man's wife. God expects us to be doing what is expected of us at all times, and we should never conclude that those who ignore what God tells us to do are good. Malachi two verse ten.

Malachi 2:10-17

10. Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

11. Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god.

12. The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts.

13. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand.

14. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.

15. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.

16. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

17. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

In the Psalms we can see that if we want eternal life, there are certain things we will be doing. One of those things is we will keep from evil and not even speak evil. We won't even say what is mean-spirited. We will do what is good, and we will not only seek peace, but we will also pursue peace. We know that God focuses attention on the righteous and is quick to oppose those who are evil. When the righteous suffer, God will help the righteous through their times of trouble. Psalm thirty-four verse twelve.

Psalm 34:12-19

12. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

- 13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.**
- 14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.**
- 15. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.**
- 16. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.**
- 17. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.**
- 18. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.**
- 19. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.**

In another Psalm we are told to depart from evil and do good. We are shown that God loves justice, true justice, and does not forget about those who serve Him. The righteous are described as speaking of wisdom and justice, based not on the societal ideals of man but on the teachings of God. Psalm thirty-seven verse twenty-seven.

Psalm 37:27-31

- 27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.**
- 28. For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.**
- 29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.**
- 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.**
- 31. The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.**

In Proverbs we are told that those who reward evil for good will never have evil depart from their house. Proverbs seventeen verse thirteen.

Proverbs 17:13

- 13. Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house.**

From a behavioral perspective, it's important to understand that behaviors serve a purpose that is fed through intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. If reinforcers are given for doing what is evil, people will do what is evil, and if reinforcers are given

for doing what is right, people will do what is right. The behaviors of animals are not too far removed from people. For instance if you have a dog that paws the sliding glass door to be let out into the backyard, there is a reason why you are seeing that behavior. Your dog might want to go into the backyard because it saw a critter back there, or it might need to go to the bathroom. I've not known dogs who paw sliding glass doors just to play mind games with people. The dog paws the sliding glass door because there is something in the yard that has its attention, and the dog knows by pawing the door you will act and open the door. If your dog needs to go to the bathroom, then when your dog paws the door, it's a good thing because the dog will go to the bathroom where it needs to go. But imagine if when the dog was a puppy you reinforced the idea that going to the bathroom inside the house was fine. That's what you would get when your dog is an adult, a big mess inside the house all the time. Naturally, dogs don't think in terms of evil and good as people would and if you have a dog or pet of any kind, your pets need to be treated with humane kindness. The thoughts that lead to actions by people are based on thoughts of good and evil. If we want to have less evil in our life, we cannot reward evil for good and good for evil. We do not need to reinforce that evil is good. Not rewarding evil for good does not mean we need to attack what is evil. We live in a society that has mostly ignored God and that would mean we would be attacking what is evil just about all of the time. While we do not reinforce as good what is evil, we do not attack what is evil. We confirm faith and what we believe, but we do not attack what is evil. When we see people doing something that is sin, we will know that the action is sin because it is listed as sin in the Bible. What the Bible lists as sin is not an attack unless we make it an attack, even a verbal attack. We do not need to attack what is sin as listed in the Bible or the people who are engaged in what the Bible lists as sin. In the end, God will be their judge, and our judge. Instead of attacking people for their sin as if we are acting in righteous judgment, we need to leave judgment to God when it comes to the sin of other people.

We will do better by making sure how we live our life is right with God, that we do not oppress others, that we live our life aligned to doing what God expects of us. We can control what we do and how we react to the world around us, and even when we see sin erupting around us, we continue to do what is upright. We continue to do what God expects of us. While we don't need to judge sin erupting around us, we also do not conform to sin that erupts around us. We continue to do what God expects of us. Proverbs twenty-eight verse one.

Proverbs 28:1-10

- 1. The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion.**
- 2. For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof: but by a man of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.**
- 3. A poor man that oppreseth the poor is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.**
- 4. They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.**
- 5. Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things.**
- 6. Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.**
- 7. Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son: but he that is a companion of riotous men shameth his father.**
- 8. He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor.**
- 9. He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.**
- 10. Whoso causeth the righteous to go astray in an evil way, he shall fall himself into his own pit: but the upright shall have good things in possession.**

When Jesus taught Nicodemus of being born again, Nicodemus had a hard time understanding what Jesus taught. Jesus then explained that through Jesus people can have eternal life and be saved, and that He was not sent to condemn the world. Jesus also acknowledged not everyone would heed His message showing that people who do what is evil hate the light and prefer to remain in darkness rather than be enlightened with Biblical truth. Those who do what is good will come to the light and embrace what is taught in the Bible. John three verse sixteen.

John 3:16-21

- 16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**
- 17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.**

18. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

21. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to do what was good even if somebody did evil to them. He showed there was never a reason to repay evil for evil. He told the brethren to have a spiritual and thankful focus in life, holding fast to that which is good while avoiding even the appearance of evil. First Thessalonians five verse fifteen.

1 Thessalonians 5:15-22

15. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16. Rejoice evermore.

17. Pray without ceasing.

18. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19. Quench not the Spirit.

20. Despise not prophesyings.

21. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

Peter wrote of the unity of the spirit based in compassion and love. He showed the need to be meek and courteous and advised that instead of seeking that which is evil, to be a blessing to others including those who were previously evil to us. He taught we need to hate what is evil and do good, to seek peace and pursue it. First Peter three verse eight.

1 Peter 3:8-12

8. Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

- 9. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.**
- 10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:**
- 11. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.**
- 12. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.**

To the Romans, Paul showed that love cannot be phony and needs to be based on avoiding what is evil and doing what is good. When it comes to brethren, they were told of the need to be kind with each other as they shared a common bond of faith. Individually, they were reminded of the need to be doing what was expected of them in all parts of their life, through work and in faith. When others treated them poorly, they were to be a blessing to them. They were never to repay evil for evil, and as much as possible to live at peace with all people. They were not to be overcome of evil, but they were to overcome evil with good. Romans twelve verse nine.

Romans 12:9-21

- 9. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.**
- 10. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;**
- 11. Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;**
- 12. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;**
- 13. Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.**
- 14. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.**
- 15. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.**
- 16. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.**
- 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**
- 18. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**
- 19. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.**
- 20. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.**

21. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Since the fateful moment when in the middle of the Garden of Eden the choice was made to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, mankind has known both good and evil. Since that time there have been times when evil has consumed our planet, and during the time of Noah evil was such the focus of mankind that God brought a flood to stem the flow of evil. Adam and Eve could have chosen to eat of the Tree of Life instead of eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but they did not, and were banished from the Garden of Eden, lest as people who might do evil, they would also live forever. We know from prophecy that when New Jerusalem is established and the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God our Father and Jesus Christ that on either side of that river will be the Tree of Life that bares fruit throughout the year, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. We cannot go back in time and change what happened with the two trees. We live in a society that knows good and evil that has mostly rejected God, and from the Bible we know with all of that as much as possible we need to live at peace with others never being overcome by evil, but overcoming evil with good.

Thank you for joining us today. God-willing we'll get together next time on the Sabbath. Until then, thank you for joining us today.