

# DIAGNOSING EVIL

John 8:42-44

**INTRO:** Turn your Bibles or turn them on to John chapter 8. The Gospel of John, the 4<sup>th</sup> book of the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. If you get to Acts, you've gone to far. The Gospel of John.

Today, I want to preach on a subject that we hear a lot about, but sadly, not from the pulpits. Every day the news channels report on this. People talk about it around the water cooler and in the break rooms at their offices. It's the single most filmed topic in all of cinematic history. I'm talking about the subject of EVIL.

I have titled my sermon today, DIAGNOSING EVIL. I want us to talk about where evil comes from and how to recognize it. And I hope that, by the Word of God, we can gain some understanding as to what is unfolding in our world today.

Before evil can be diagnosed, there must be the acknowledgement that evil exist.

In three recent research studies, (Gallup, Barna, and The Harris Poll) all, reported similar numbers with about 40% of Americans saying they do NOT believe in an actual Devil as an evil being. That number is up significantly from a 2001 Gallup poll where 68% said that they BELIEVED in the devil. In that poll, only 20% said they DID NOT believe in Satan, with 12% saying they weren't sure.

In the more recent polls, there is a number breakdown. People who tend toward religiosity are much more likely to believe in the devil. 83% of Americans who said religion is "very" important in their lives believe in the devil, but the number drops to 62% among those for whom religion is "fairly" important. But the next statistic is the number you need to take note of; only 22% of those who said religion is "not very" important, said they believe in the devil. That means that 78% of people, who only occasionally go to church, OR don't go at all, 78%, DON'T believe in the Satan himself. Now, the number of people in America who only go to church occasionally, or not at all, is a LARGE number—millions of people. And of those millions of people, 78% don't believe in the Devil.

When there is a cultural denial of an evil being, (Satan, the Devil) then we find it difficult to rationalize the existence of evil on any level. If there's no Devil, does evil even exist?

So, because there is such a large number of people who deny that the Devil exist, and consequently, evil, then there is this need to explain away or rationalize the bad we see and are witness to in our world. In most cases, that rationalization comes in the form of OTHER diagnoses—mental illnesses and the such.

Today however, I declare, on the authority of God's Word, that evil does indeed exist, and that it originates from it's head, the Devil. In the KJV of the bible, the Devil is called by 32 different titles. Among those, are the names; Wicked One, Thief, Satan, Old Serpent, Murderer, Great Dragon, Father of Lies, our Adversary and Enemy, and the list goes on. Those names are not very flattering, but they are accurate in description.

In John Chapter 8, Jesus is speaking to some of the Pharisees and other religious rulers of the Jews. He's been going back and forth to the Temple and teaching. As many gather to listen to His words, the Pharisees sometimes interrupt and ask questions. In the verses we're about to read Jesus has some harsh words for the religious rulers. Let's read together beginning in verse 42.

**John 8:42-44 (BSB)** *“Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on My own, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you are unable to accept My message. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, refusing to uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, because he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

**WOW, those are strong words!** Jesus then says of Satan in **John 10:10**, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...”*

In these verses we have compelling evidence offered, in the testimony of Jesus, that people who think and commit evil acts are doing so based on the sway and influence of the evil one.

The world has certainly known and been witness to great atrocities throughout history. Since the beginning of time, evil has been perpetrated against those unsuspecting, and unable to protect themselves. In an attempt to wrap our minds around the madness, often, we use the term “senseless crimes”, as if there is no “reason” behind the acts. But the Word of God clearly states that ultimately, all evil is from a single source. That source is a BEING! Notice with me...

**I) THE CONTRAST:** **vv 42,44** *“If God were your Father...(but)...You belong to your father, the devil...”* There is both a GOOD and BAD influence in this world. All that is good, comes from God. And all that is evil comes from Satan. The Bible teaches that all mankind belongs to one of these two camps.

**1 John 2:15-17** *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. (We know from 1 John 5:19 That “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.” So the world and Satan are connected as one in scripture) If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world is passing away, along with its desires; but whoever does the will of God remains forever.”*

The World, and all its bad, as it relates to Heaven and all its good, seems to be the “opposite side of the coin” so to speak; the backside of the billboard; the dark reflection in the mirror that seems to suggest an alternate state or universe. Everything that God is and Heaven has to offer, Satan is the extreme opposite of. And this is well documented in scripture.

**1 John 3:7-8** *‘Little children, let no one deceive you: The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. 8 The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the very start...’*

**Galatians 5:16-23** *“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh craves what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; 20 idolatry and sorcery; hatred, discord, jealousy, and rage; rivalries, divisions, factions, 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

## I) THE CONTRAST: vv 42,44

**II) THE CONCERN:** v 44 *“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out his desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, refusing to uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, because he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

In vv 39-41 we have this heated dialogue between the Jews and Jesus: *“Abraham is our father,” they replied (to Jesus). “If you were children of Abraham,” said Jesus, “you would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now you are trying to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham never did such a thing. 41 You are doing the works of your father.”*

So, what are we suppose to make of this? Well, Jesus is certainly addressing a specific group of people here, the Scribes and Pharisees gathered in Jerusalem. But He’s also speaking to a greater truth; that is, evil people do evil things, because it’s in their DNA. They are acting out in the way their evil father directs them to.

Now here’s the CONCERN—that’s still happening to this very day! It has happened throughout history and is continuing to do so. It started with Cain and Able in the Old Testament! The New Testament begins with the murder of Jesus! The pagan, godless Vikings, pillaged and plundered, raped and killed! From the 16th to the 19th centuries, we have the atrocities of the slave trades, in which Africans sold out their own people to white men that would abuse and torture the black people they “owned”. And even after slavery was abolished, hate crimes against blacks continued with lynchings and brutal murders. But then the lynchings finally came to an end as sentiment and awareness arose, but nothing changes in the hearts of men. SO, whites continue to kill blacks, and blacks kill whites. Blacks kills Blacks, and whites kill whites! And many kill with no distinguishing marker or prejudice at all. They just kill whomever they choose! IT’S EVIL CARRYING OUT ITS EVIL DESIRES ON THE EARTH! And those in the world are doing nothing more but carrying on the family tradition of their father, the Devil!

**ILLUS:** If you need a more scientific viewpoint, in his book, *People of the Lie*, the late psychiatrist M. Scott Peck, suggests that certain people have departed so far from social mores that they are “evil”. Peck lists some specific characteristics of “evil” people...

- They are consistently self-deceiving, with the intent of avoiding guilt and maintaining a self-image of perfection
- They deceive others as a consequence of their own self-deception
- They project their evils and sins onto very specific targets while being apparently normal with everyone else
- They commonly hate with the pretense of love, for the purpose of self-deception as much as deception of others
- They maintain a high level of respectability, and lie incessantly in order to do so
- They are consistent in their sins. Evil people are characterized not so much by the magnitude of their sins, but by their consistency (of destructiveness)
- They are unable to think from the viewpoint of their victim
- They have a covert intolerance to criticism and other forms of narcissistic injury

Peck goes on to suggest that many of these people don’t have mental illnesses as some would diagnose, but that they in fact, have a MORAL ILLNESS.

## I) THE CONTRAST: vv 42,44

II) THE CONCERN: v 44 CONTINUED The truth is, there is a great moral deficiency in our world. And that can rightly, from a spiritual perspective, be called "moral illness". And the virus, this sin sickness, has a known and single source or origin, it's the evil one, the devil! Moral illness is a genetic disease passed down from the father to all his children, to those who have chosen to follow his evil ways.

III) THE CURE: vv 42-43 "Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on My own, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you are unable to accept My message."

The cure for our sin sickness, the cure for our illness, is God the Father, and His Son, Jesus, whom the Father sent to save us.

1 John 4: 4-5, 9-10 "Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness as well. Indeed, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that Christ appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin...9 Anyone born of God refuses to practice sin, because God's seed abides in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 10 By this the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil:"

## CONCLUSION: