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Presentation Transcript
The Wicked
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The title of this presentation is called *The Wicked*. It's part of an ongoing series on *Mental Health and the Bible*.

In the Bible, there are several words used to describe people and the things that they do that God considers wrong or immoral. In society, there are also words used to describe people and the things they do that society considers wrong or immoral. The problem is that the words God and society use are often different, though they are talking about the same things. Also, the behaviors are viewed in different ways. What I want to do today is connect what God says and what psychology says so that, when we read the Bible and watch the news and see what's going on around us, we can connect the Bible with what we're looking at in the present day. That's our small contribution at LifeResource Ministries – to help people integrate their Christianity with contemporary life.

Let's talk about some English words, that we use in modern English, to talk about bad things. The first word I want to talk to you about is *evil* – the word *evil*. Webster's gives some definitions for that. It says: 1) *is morally reprehensible, sinful, wicked – like an evil impulse*; 2) *arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct – like a person of evil reputation*; 3) *causing discomfort or repulsion, offensive – evil odor* is another definition. And that isn't so much what we're talking about, but the first two are – something that is morally reprehensible, sinful or wicked. 4) *causing harm, pernicious – for example, the evil insitution of slavery* would be an example. Okay, so that's one word that we use in English.

Another word that I want to focus on is actually, in English, a synonym for evil. We've already heard it read in the definition of evil. That is the word *wicked* – *morally very bad or evil*. So they mean the same thing in English, right? *Fierce, vicious* – you know, *a wicked dog*. *Disposed to or marked by mischief, roguish, causing or likely to cause harm, distress or trouble – wicked storm or a wicked person*. *Going beyond reasonable or predictable limits of evil* – and sometimes even good, like a pitcher that throws a wicked fastball or that lady that bakes a wicked cherry pie. That's not the way we're using the word today.

So these two words – wicked and evil – in our language, are interchangeable most of the time with, perhaps, evil getting the nod, for the most intense, right? If you were going to describe the devil, for example, in modern terms, evil would seem to fit more than would wicked, wouldn't you think? Evil has, sort of, a stronger sense to it in our language today. But, as we're going to see, these two words don't have the same meaning in the Bible that they mean to us today.

If we look in the Bible, the word *evil*.... I'm going to read to you out of a book called *Synonyms of the Old Testament*. "The word for *evil* in Hebrew is *ra*. It is rendered *wicked* a great many times and it is also frequently rendered *bad*" – I'm quoting from this now – "but in the latter class of passages, that which is injurious is referenced rather than that which is morally evil. *Ra*, in fact, generally indicates the rough exterior of wrong doing as a breach of harmony and as a breaking up of what is good and desirable in man and society. While the prominent characteristic of the godly is lovingkindness, one of the most marked features of the *ungodly* man is that his course is injury to both himself and everyone around him." That guy that doesn't have enough self-control to raise his kids right, and blows his top at them, and hits them too hard, and spanks them, and injures them when he does so, makes life hard for himself and hard for his family. People that speed and drive wrecklessly cause trouble for themselves and those around them. Those would be some minor examples of what the word *evil* in the Bible means. And it can go to greater extents than that.

But let's read the word *wicked*. "*Rasha* in the Bible is the word most generally rendered wicked in the Authorized Version" – again from *Synonyms of the Old Testament*. "It supposedly originally referred to the activity, the tossing and the confusion in which the wicked live and the perpetual agitation which they cause others." Then he quotes Isaiah, I think. "'The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace,' says my God, 'to the wicked.' Job also looks forward to the grave where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. In the book of Job the wicked are represented as triumphing for a time, but as finely put into outer darkness." So, if you're a wicked person, that's a step past just being evil – the rough exterior of wrong-doing. But it is somebody that is incorrigible. "In the Psalms, they are represented as busily occupied in disturbing the peace of others – as in trying to destroy them." So these are people that want to *destroy* other people. "They are frequently contrasted with the righteous and their ways are fully described in Ezekiel 18 and 33. And if Kenicott's view of Isaiah 53:9 could be substantiated, we would read of the Messiah, 'He made His grave with the rich, but with the wicked was His death,' The use of the word to mark the robbers or disturbers of the public peace would have been very appropriate."

So, *ra* – evil – used in the Bible – the rough face of ungodliness – as people who are always causing themselves and others trouble by their violations of God's law – well, that could include all of us some of the time, couldn't it? We all make mistakes and cause other people and ourselves problems.

I had a man come to my office recently, who had been turned in to child protective services for abusing his children. He was a widower. His wife died of a heroin overdose four years ago. So he was left with three little kids and had no clue what to do with them.

He'd lose his temper because he didn't know how to get them to do what he wanted. One of the children came to school with bruises, and they told the teacher, and that was that. So he wound up in my office as a result of that situation – bouts of out-of-control anger. He just didn't know how to get them to comply. He would tolerate their misbehavior until he couldn't stand it anymore, then he'd blow – overreact – and then he'd feel really bad about what he did. Then he'd tolerate more misbehavior until he couldn't stand it anymore, then he'd blow – overreact – and feel sorry. Standard cycle of abuse. But it was obvious that he *loved* his children. He was wracked with guilt over the belt spankings that he'd given the two older boys. So that's an indication of somebody that is doing something that is really wrong and harmful, but it's not that he *wants* to do it. It's that he can't figure out how to avoid it.

On the other side of it, I had a twenty-three-year-old woman come to my office. She said she needed anger management training and was very concerned about getting a report of her progress and that sort of thing. I asked her if she thought she needed anger management training. She said that she didn't think she did. I said, "Why are you here then?" She said that her parents had threatened to take away her eight-month-old son if she didn't get some help, supposedly. Well, in the course of the discussion, I learned that she was married and living with her husband and her husband's parents in their home. I asked if they thought she needed anger management. They said that no, they didn't think that she did. I started to ask her some more questions, because things just weren't adding up. So I asked her about her life as a child. She said it was normal. So I asked her, "Who soothed you when you were a little child when you fell down and hurt your knee?" She said, "Well, my big brother did." "Well, what about your parents?" "Well, my mother wasn't nice to me. She would lock me in the tool shed sometimes and I was bitten by black widows on several occasions. She tried to smother me when I was seven." Later in the session she mentioned that she was legally blind, but she could see with glasses. And I said, "Were you born that way?" And she said, "No, I was born with normal eyes, but when my mother was angry with me, she would pour acetone in them."

So, do we see the difference between her mother and the man that was turned into child protective services because he couldn't control his temper? Yeah, there's a *big* difference there – in those two people. To use biblical terms, he did some evil things – some hurtful things – but that woman was doing something she had to know would seriously injure her child. And now she's threatening to take her daughter's child away from her. And we shudder to think what would happen to the baby if she is successful in that. So this woman could be classified with the wicked – in the biblical terminology.

You know, those men who plotted to destroy Jesus *knew* what they were doing. They knew what they were doing and they persisted anyway. The Bible classifies them with the wicked.

There was a terrible movie that came out some time ago – very difficult to watch. Denzel Washington played a police detective in this movie. He had lots of power and influence, but he had *no* feelings for people – no conscience. He never felt any remorse. We would call him, in English, an evil man, because that is the strongest word we have to describe

him. But, in the Bible, he would be classified and lumped in with a group of people the Bible calls the *wicked*.

Some of my clients shoplift. Some do drugs. Some of them drink. They cause all kinds of problems for themselves and for those they love. But they're not intent on destroying people. And they have a conscience. They feel remorse when they do bad things. Adolf Hitler caused a lot of problems, but he was intent on destroying people and felt no remorse for it. He would be categorized with the wicked – no conscience and no remorse.

So, let's read some more about this kind of person in the Bible and see what identifies this characteristic of this crowd. In Proverbs 29:7, it says:

Prov. 29:7 – *The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.* They don't understand the experience of other people. So they can't have any feelings for them. They have no empathy.

I was talking to a five-year-old who was in my office a couple weeks ago. He was playing with my toys. He's five years old – friendly little guy. And out of nowhere, while he's playing with my toys, he said, "I like to hurt people." So I began a very low-key, slow, subtle exploration to find out if he had a conscience or if he was just suffering from a lack of empathy because he didn't have enough experience. I think, in his case, he was having trouble understanding how hurting other people felt, because he'd not been hurt that much himself. His parents were, maybe, too overprotective of him and haven't given him the opportunity to experience much of that. He is capable of feeling pangs of conscience. So the hair went down on the back of my neck a little bit after I understood that. The verdict is not in on that. We're going to have to do some more. The reason his parents brought him in was that they saw that he is lacking something relationally with other people. Extensive tests have indicated the same. So, we're trying to figure out what is going on there right now.

The next thing that I want to read is in Proverbs 12:10.

Prov. 12:10 – *A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.*

I was listening to a talk show recently on my way home, where the hosts were discussing the case of a teenage boy who had terrorized his neighborhood by killing cats and leaving them on the lawns of the neighbors. Apparently, when he was called to testify, he got really excited while he was describing how he killed them. He kind of indicted himself. One of the hosts commented that that kind of person can't be helped. That may well be true. He's a teenager. He may be set in that already. Although, there are some modifying statements that we might make later about that.

Ecclesiastes 8:11 is another one. Okay, so no conscience. People that aren't wicked have a care for animals. People that *are* wicked sometimes don't. Their kindest acts are cruel. I read about some people once, in Scott Peck's book, *People of the Lie*, whose oldest son had committed suicide – shot himself with a rifle. For the following Christmas, they gave

that rifle to their younger son as a Christmas present. The kindest acts of the wicked are cruel. We would call that an *evil* act. But in the Bible, that's called *wickedness*.

Ecc. 8:11 – *Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

You can apply this by saying, “Because it takes three months to get to court for a traffic ticket, sometimes people are going to speed anyway,” which doesn't make too much sense. But if you look at what the commentaries say, they say that this is talking about the fact that because God delays His judgement, those people who are wicked – who are without remorse and without conscience – don't fear God. Because they have no conscience, there is nothing internal to hold them back from doing harm to others. And the implication is, the only way you can stop them from that is to imprison them or to kill them, because they are going to do it. They don't see anything wrong with it – no way to inhibit them. That's why when Neville Chamberlain tried to appease Hitler – he came home waving the agreement, saying, “This is peace in our time” – it only emboldened Hitler to go further into his wickedness.

So they have no fear of God or authority. They have fear of punishment. There is no sense of rightness or justice or civility.

Isa. 26:10 - *Though grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness. Even in a land of uprightness, they go on doing evil and regard not the majesty of the LORD.*

So extending mercy to wicked people doesn't help them. That's what the Bible tells us. I want you to think with me about what that means. Jesus said that His loving act of self-sacrifice and mercy – the forgiveness that He extends to us – would eventually draw everyone to Himself. But the wicked are excluded from that, because they are not moved by it. They have given up their conscience. So there is no way for God to draw that kind of person into relationship. They don't feel any pangs of guilt or remorse for what they have done.

I was watching a movie recently. It's called *The Remains of the Day*. I bet you think all I do is watch movies, right? That's especially true here, because nobody here ever watches any, but.... I still know that there are some folks that know about the movies I've watched, and when I quote them, it makes sense to them. So I'm going to continue to do that. The movie, *The Remains of the Day*, was partly about a British aristocrat, between World Wars I and II, who was sympathetic towards the Germans after World War I because of the harsh way the allies treated them. They imposed economic sanctions because they were afraid that, if they had a good economy, they would rearm and start another war, which is exactly what they did. Well, one of his German friends committed suicide, because he lost his fortune between those two wars. So he wanted to help the German people. Later, when the Nazis took control of Germany, he didn't understand what they were. He didn't understand what *wickedness* was. He invited some of the high-ranking Nazi officials to his home. While they were there, they were making notes about all his valuable possessions and fine art, because they were planning to take it from him. So they were greedy, superior and self-centered. They thought they *deserved* the

possessions of others, because they believed they were superior. That is exactly what the Bible talks about when it talks about the wicked.

Prov. 21:4 – *Haughty eyes and a proud heart, which are the lamp of the wicked, are sin.* I mean, it's like a big red beacon on their heads flashing out to us – haughty eyes and a proud heart.

Now there are lots of people with haughty eyes and a proud heart that aren't categorized in with the wicked, but when you see that, you need to check out and see, is there a conscience there? Do they have the ability to feel remorse. Is there some kind of fear of society and authority there? Do they respond to mercy? These are questions that we can ask.

Another thing is, because they have no conscience and no compunction, they'll do whatever they feel they need to get what they want. They'll lie. They'll plot. They'll manipulate. That doesn't matter to them. It's what you get, not how you get it, that is important. Values and morals are not a part of their thinking.

Psa. 64:2 – *Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked, from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity, who whet their tongue like a sword and bend their bow to shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect. And suddenly they do shoot at him and fear not. They encourage themselves in an evil matter. They commune of laying snares privily. And they say, "Who shall see them?"* They think that they can get away with everything because they are so smart. There is sort of a narcissistic self-centeredness that goes along with that kind of thinking.

I've talked about John Edwards, the senator, who, when he was asked why he committed adultery on his wife, who was sick with cancer, said he thought he deserved it and he thought he could get away with it. I'm not saying he's wicked; I'm saying he is narcissistic, at the least. I mean, how would somebody, who is a part of the most scrutinized body of people in the world, think he could get away with anything, unless he thought he was smarter than everybody else? And we would talk about the "deserved it" part of it.

V-6 – *They search out iniquities. They accomplish a diligent search. Both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.*

So, not trustworthy, greedy, superior, self-centered, narcissistic, unresponsive to mercy, no fear of God or authority, no conscience, no empathy.

Let's switch gears a little bit. Now let's look into the psychological literature to find these same characteristics.

Have you ever been watching CNN, or FOX News, or some of these stations when some horrific crime happens? They'll usually have a couple of profilers come on and they'll talk psycho-babble about why it is happening. Well, we're going to talk some psycho-babble today, but we're going to compare it with what the Bible says, so that we can

make the hookup. We also want to notice that, while we're doing that, that the Bible and the psychological literature approaches these kind of people in different ways. The Bible organizes it around motives and morality and the psyche literature arranges it around behavior. Consequently, even within the psyche community, the organizing documents that describe this stuff has been criticized, because it doesn't take into account the matters of what we would call, in the Bible, the heart. They would probably talk about the psyche or the attitude.

The first place that we want to go is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health* – DSM4, we call it – and we want to look at what is called a personality disorder – *anti-social personality disorder* (ASPD). Let me read you the symptoms of this kind of personality disorder. What do you mean *personality disorder*? We'll get to that in a minute. But listen to this:

Persistent lying or stealing; superficial charm – Hitler was a pretty persuasive guy at first, right? Pretty slick – *parasitic lifestyle; apparent lack of remorse or empathy; inability to care about hurting others; inability to keep jobs or stay in school; impulsivity and/or recklessness; lack of realistic long-term goals; an inability or persistent failure to develop and execute long-term plans; inability to make or keep friends or maintain relationships, such as marriage; poor behavioral control; expressions of irritability, annoyance, impatience, threats, aggressions, verbal abuse; inadequate control of anger and temper; narcissism; elevated self-appraisal or a sense of extreme entitlement; a persistent agitated or depressed feeling* – and they have in parentheses some psychobabble – (*disphoria*) – we'll say it is a depressed feeling – *history of childhood conduct disorder* – we'll talk about that in a minute – *recurring difficulties with the law; tendency to violate the boundaries and rights of others; substance abuse; aggressive, often violent behavior; prone to getting involved in fights; inability to tolerate boredom; disregard for the safety of self or others; persistent attitude of irresponsibility; disregard for social rules, obligations and norms. People with a diagnosis of anti-social personality disorder often experience difficulties with authority figures.*

I mean, there it is, right? The empathy thing. It's all there. There is probably one thing missing from this. We'll talk about that later.

Now I want you to notice that there is another type of disorder that is sometimes seen in people who are eighteen and younger. If they have this through eighteen, then they call it anti-social later, because it eventually escalates into that. That's called *conduct disorder*. I want you to notice what it says here:

Aggression to people and animals – there's the animals things. The Bible talked about how the wicked are not kind to animals – *bullies, threatens or intimidates others; initiates physical fights; has used a weapon that could cause serious physical harm – a bat, brick, broken bottle, knife or gun – physically cruel to people or animals; steals from a victim while confronting them; forces someone into sexual activity; destruction of property; deliberately engages in fire-setting with the intention to cause damage; deliberately destroys others property; deceitfulness; lying or stealing; has broken into someone else's building, house or car; lies to obtain goods or favors to avoid obligations; steals items*

without confronting a victim; shoplifting, but without breaking and entering; serious violations of rules; oftens stays out late at night despite parental objections; runs away from home; often truant from school.

Kids that act this way throughout high school, without some kind of mediating intervention, usually move to the next level. This is the precursor to becoming, what the Bible calls, *wicked*.

And then there is another one called *oppositional-defiant disorder*. And that can start even earlier. *Frequent temper tantrums; excessive arguing with adults; questioning rules; active defiance and refusal to comply with adult requests and rules; deliberate attempts to annoy or upset people; blaming others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior; being touchy or easily annoyed by others; frequent anger and resentment; mean and hateful talking when upset; spiteful attitude; and revenge seeking.* So when a small child acts this way, the chances increase that they will, as they get older, manifest behaviors associated with conduct disorder – and older yet, with anti-social. So these symptoms I just read are indicators of what is coming in the future, unless something is done to change it, in small children.

Now, I've met college-aged people that fit the *oppositional-defiant disorder*. They probably aren't going to go toward anti-social. They're probably just going to be a crabby, dishonest, onery person. They are not going to go that far into it. But when it starts early, then that is a bad indicator.

What are the causes of this happening? Why does it happen? Well, the first thing we want to look at is something nobody can really help. And that is *brain damage*. Sometimes people suffer personality change after traumatic brain injury.

I knew a man once who suffered a severe stroke and his brain was injured. It wasn't traumatic brain injury, but his brain was injured. He lived for about a year and then he died. After he died, I went to visit his widow. She asked me if I believed her husband could have become possessed by the devil after his stroke. I asked her why she would ask that question. She said that he would become very cruel and verbally abusive and angry. I explained to her that, more likely, his brain wasn't working right any longer and that had caused severe personality change, which is...sometimes we see this in people who suffer strokes, or Alzheimer's, or other forms of dementia. It's not anything the person can help and certainly they wouldn't want to be that way. It's not really them.

Another thing is *genetic* issues. It's believed that some kinds of personality issues have to do with genetics. When a child is born with an even disposition – you know, they are an “easy” baby, for example – and you can see the same kind of easy-goingness in their parents or grandparents, then we love to give the credit to that. And it's probably true, especially if we see that in them right from birth. When it is the other way, we have to also give credit. And we know that personality traits of a person can be passed on, so that's something to think about as well. I happen to believe that, if you get that from genetics, there is something you can do about it. Whereas, with brain damage, you can't so much.

The third thing to think about is *drugs and alcohol*. You know, the term *mean drunk* comes to mind. Or I think about the thirteen-year-old I had in therapy for a couple of years. She'd been told she had bi-polar disorder and was on psychotropic drugs – and could have been classed oppositional-defiant. She was told she was bi-polar and was on all kinds of terrible stuff – couldn't sleep, overweight, conduct and emotional regulation problems. When I finally convinced her that she wasn't bi-polar and that she had an attachment problem, she, without telling anybody, weened herself off her meds and started sleeping better, losing weight, her complexion cleared up, her mood leveled out, her behavior came into line. So the psychiatrists that think they know everything about all this – that were pumping her full of all of that stuff – were actually making it worse! So there is a case of legal medication *causing* someone to be really abusive verbally to their mother and things like that. A lot of mean things have been done on crack, meth and prescription amphetamines, too.

Then the fourth thing to think about is *environment*. Most of the people in prison for life have been diagnosed with anti-social personality disorder. And they were also – most of them – abused as children. Mean treatment can make people mean. Not all of them go over the edge into a state of no-conscience, though.

So what are the implications for all of this? Well, we talked about personality disorder. And when we read the symptoms and all, we don't really see everything about it. I wanted to read you a quote about personality disorders in general: *defined by the American Psychiatric Association as an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the culture of the individual who exhibits it.*

Let me translate that from pscho-babble to English. When people have personalities that cause them trouble in everyday life in the extreme, they may have symptoms that would fit the symptoms given for different kinds of personality disorders. You might be thinking, "Hey, that's me." We all do things that cause us problems. And we do them over and over again, because that's what we're like. But there is a second paragraph here we need to read.

These patterns, as noted, are inflexible and pervasive across many situations due, in large part, to the fact that such behavior is ego-centric. That is, the patterns are consistent with ego-integrity of the individual and, therefore, perceived to be appropriate by that person.

Translation in English: When these behavior patterns are fixed in most areas of life and, when the person believes that the way they are is that best way to be, then it is a personality disorder. And the key there is they *believe* that that's the best way to be.

Now, think about that. Let's think about the similarities between what the Bible says about the wicked and what psychiatry and psychology about it. The wicked – the anti-social people – don't care if they hurt other people. The psyche community, along with the Bible, believes that there is no excuse for hurting other people. It doesn't matter what

has happened to you. I hope all the people, who can't say the word *psychology* without adding *godless* in front of it, understand this – that most psychologists' take, when faced with anti-social action, is *not* to make excuses for it, but to point to people who have been abused and who still find a way to live in the world without hurting other people. So for them, like Christians, there are always reasons why people hurt others, but there are *never* any good excuses.

There is a book, written by a man – it's called a *A Child Called It* – and it is his own story about his terrible, terrible abuse as a child. He shows how he found a way to live in the world without doing the same thing to others that was done to him. We *all* get to choose how we're going to behave – perhaps brain damage excepted. Heredity can be overcome. Environment can be overcome. Addiction can be overcome.

Now, we pointed out that – when we were looking at anti-social personality – that there is an escalation that goes through the lifespan – from conduct disorder to oppositional-defiant disorder, and then finally to anti-social. I think that this points toward an additional step. When a person has anti-social symptoms – that is, hurting others is okay and there is no conscience involved, and believing that that is completely me – ego-centric – just who I am – I think that there is another step that goes beyond that. And that is giving over to that completely and just going with it.

I was working with another therapist, who is a non-religious person, on a case together. The client is a teenager, who has been abused and who has become very deceitful and manipulative. This non-religious therapist knows that this manipulateness has been caused by what happened to her and that it is bad for her, and for those she loves, and for society. So she is working to help her to become a more honest, straightforward, genuine person. Isn't that interesting? A godless psychologist trying to help somebody become a moral person. I don't see any problem with that. Do you? Of course, I haven't poured concrete around my opinion, so I was able to change.

So these people are hard to help. That's what we think. We know that. They think that their way is right. The Bible says that the heart is fully set in them to do evil. We just read from the psyche literature that these people are hard to help, because they believe their way is the best way for them to be – same thing really – fully set in them to do evil.

I have met people who were anti-social, who, as they got more mature, kind of gave up on that. So there is another step that takes place there for some folks, where they just aren't willing to give up on that, and aren't willing to repent, and they're just going to be the way they are for, probably, a number of different reasons.

1 Timothy 4:2 says that there are certain people who:

1 Tim. 4:2 – *Speaking lies in hypocrisy have their conscience seared with a hot iron.* The word for *seared* is *cauterized* in the Greek. They won't control themselves.

So psychology believes that the same solutions are in place that the Bible talks about. Psychology believes that the wicked don't care if they hurt others. They also believe that

there is no excuse for their behavior. They know that it is important to restrain these people, because they are going to do wrong if we don't. They know that they are pretty hard to work with because they are set – a lot of them. And they know that, if they don't control themselves, they have to be controlled or, in God's case, ended. Right? There is no internal control, so there has to be one from outside – or just not to be around.

So what I want to ask you about now is, is it possible to change? Well, I think God is going to take that, He tells us, on a case-by-case basis. We know that in psychology and in the Bible, for some people, it is possible to change. There is evidence that change can happen because some people *have* changed. Some ruthless murderers have repented. Some might have that ego-centric state of feeling that they are just a murderer by nature, but they learn they can change and they do. Some people do that through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Some do it through therapy. But then there are those who don't want to change – who *won't*. Those are the people we call *psychopaths* in psychology and *wicked* in the Bible. And there is no place for them in society, according to society, and no place in the Kingdom of God, according to God, for those kind of people.

So that's pretty rough stuff to think about. How can we conclude this on a positive note? Well, I think the positive side of this issue is two-fold. Number one: take good care of your conscience, because it separates you from that personality state that spells eternal death. Instead of doing wrong and searing it over with a stubborn heart, we need to rub our consciences with the sandpaper of the Word of God and make it *really* sensitive, so that we can tell the difference between right and wrong. Step number two: One of the commentaries said that the opposite of evil is lovingkindness. So we ought to give thought to giving up our pride, our superiority, our rightness in our own eyes, and put on the lovingkindness of God toward everybody – no matter how they might be treating us in the moment. I think, if we *do* those things, we're going to align naturally with God's heart and attitude and Spirit, and He will help us. And He will work in us that work that begins to spell eternal life.