"It is not the strength of your faith but the object of your faith that actually saves you." — Timothy J. Keller

Isaiah 45:4–7 (NKJV) ⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. ⁵ I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other; *There is* no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, ⁶ That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That *there is* none besides Me. I *am* the LORD, and *there is* no other; ⁷ I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these *things*.'

Much of the last series was spent addressing governmental authority, (kings, dictators, presidents and officials).

The question came up that if God set up and ordained ALL authority then why were there so many EVIL rulers. We answered that question and it opened up another interesting topic about evil itself.

The basic questions asked by many Christians and non-Christians alike is this one. "If God is a good God and is sovereign ruler over everything and He has made everything, why is there so much evil and suffering in the world? To some, the fact of so much evil proves that the God of the Bible is not who we say He is.

Last week we heard a message from Dr. John MacArthur titled "Why does God allow so much suffering and Evil?" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LFzk1afiD8

If you were to do a google search on the topic you would find many postings trying to answer this question and the answers vary almost as much as the postings.

I feel I have been led to address this question so that we will not be ignorant to the question. I do not claim to be equal to or better than other bible scholars, teacher and writer but let me say that even they do not all agree with the answer and some will come right out and say that they do not know the answer.

Dr R.C. Sproul speaking at a Ligonier conference October 2013, on the topic, "What is Evil and Where Did it Come from offered his short answer to the question which was, "I don't know." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Ir6pKEV0RQ

At this point as I begin this series, I do not know exactly what the final answer will be and I am pleased with that because it means I am not taking a predetermined answer and trying to justify it. I will depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and teach us.

In MacArthur's message he had several points which we may refer to as we go through the series. The first of his points is stating the fact that EVIL DOES EXIST. I think we can all agree with that.

Next, he categorized evil into 4 areas/types

1. Natural or Physical Evil
2. Moral Evil
3. Supernatural Evil
4. Evil of Hell

This categorization of evil was first mentioned in the Theodicy of German Philosopher, Gottfried Leibniz (1646-1716). https://www.iep.utm.edu/leib-met/

> Definition - Theodicy (The/od/ I/ cy) - the vindication of divine goodness and providence in view of the existence of evil. 2. defense of God's goodness and omnipotence in view of the existence of evil (MW)

Dr. Leibniz listed three distinct type of evil. His three included Natural/Physical evil, Moral Evil and Metaphysical evil which boils down to saying that the only good and perfect being is God all other beings are prone to evil. This raises the total to 5 categories.
1. Metaphysical –The only perfect being that exist is God. God creates all things (43:50)
2. Physical – Calamities, Diseases, bad health.
3. Moral – Because we are finite and falls short and prone to sin. If so then that to many may be excusable

I mention this to give an example of two well respected bible scholars who do not come to the exact same conclusion regarding evil. I hope to answer this question during the series as well.
This is as academic as I hope to get on the subject.

The absolute foundational source for the series will be from the Bible. I referred to commentators and respected scholars to verify, give clarity and their opinions.

For the purpose of this series I am going to reduce the categories down to just three.
1. Natural/Physical Evil
2. Moral evil
3. Demonic evil which includes evil from Hell

We will not cover Metaphysical evil because I fear it will be too academic and not one we encounter on a personal level. If you are interested in knowing more about it, I suggest you google it and do your own personal study.

The very first thing we must do is define the word "EVIL." Like on Sesame Street, "the word of the day is "EVIL.

Before we go and try to determine the biblical definition let's look at the secular definition.
Webster - **Evil – Adjective** – A morally reprehensible **:** SINFUL, WICKED
b: causing discomfort or repulsion: OFFENSIVE (MW)

Evil - Noun - **a:** the fact of suffering, misfortune, and wrongdoing
b: a cosmic evil force.: **something that brings sorrow**, distress, or **calamity**

When defined as a noun (**something that brings sorrow**) It can be broaden to cover almost anything we think that brings sorrow even if it is of our own making.

The very first time the word "Evil" appears in the Bible is in Gen 2
2

Genesis 2:9 (NKJV) ⁹ *And out of the ground the L*ORD *God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.***

Take note again that the two opposites are "good" and evil" not "good" and "bad".

Evil – the root word in is Hebrew [ra /rah/] (raw – ah). It occurs 663 times. The "AV" translates it as "evil" 442 times, wickedness 59 times then wicked, mischief, adversary. bad and hurt totaling 83 more times. This first list can be directly connected to moral evil. It is also translated trouble, sore, affliction, totaling 30 times. This second list can relate to natural/physical evil.

If we look at all the synonyms for "evil" none of them seem to be related to any natural or physical event or action.

Now it seems that based on some of the Biblical translations of the root word the definition coverage of evil is very broad to also include such words as calamity and disaster perhaps from the definition translated "trouble"

At this point let me give you my definition of EVIL. I don't do this arrogantly or as being smarter than everyone else. This definition may be refined as we continue in this series, but here it is now.

My definition---Evil is: any intentional harm or hurt done to any person, place, or thing.
      Person--physical harm, reputation, character, possessions.
      Place--harm to a city, country.
      Thing-- the earth, water, oceans, possessions.

Evil does not just happen. There must be an impetus for it.

So far, I know I have laid a lot of foundation, but it is very necessary. Let us take a look at a verse that will help me make my point and will also be used to further define this topic of evil.

Isaiah 45:6–7 (KJV 1900) ⁶ *That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, That there is none beside me. I am the L*ORD*, and there is none else.* ⁷ *I form the light, and create darkness**: I make peace, and create evil: I the L*ORD *do all these things.***

I chose this verse because it addresses many things related to evil which we will cover later. But this verse is used by people to justify their belief that **it is God that created and sends evil**. *(v7 I make peace, **and create evil**: I the L*ORD *do all these things.)*

Let me cover one area. Look at other translations of this passage.
1. *Isaiah 45:7 (NKJV)* ⁷ *I form the light and create darkness, **I make peace and create calamity; I, the L*ORD*, do all these things.'***
2. *Isaiah 45:7 (NIV84)* ⁷ *I form the light and create darkness, **I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the L*ORD*, do all these things.***
3. *Isaiah 45:7 (NCV)* ⁷ *I made the light and the darkness.**I bring peace, and I cause troubles. I, the L*ORD*, do all these things.***
4. *Isaiah 45:7 (NLT)* ⁷ *I create the light and make the darkness. **I send good times and bad times. I, the L*ORD*, am the one who does these things.***

Now I have spent this whole time to make one point and that is that the use of the word "evil" has too broad of a definition when used to describe a "natural" disaster, calamity, plague, illness or any and all things or events cause as a result of a natural occurrence.

We will come back to this passage because there is a lot more to unpack in it.
I probably taxed your minds more than you expected or I intended. So, let me try to close with what I think is a practical example.

This past week we have all been drawn to the hurricane event of hurricane Florence and in Houston we suffered from hurricane Harvey. Now according to some translations this was an evil event.

ARE HURRICANES A NATRUAL EVIL? MAYBE NOT.
5 Things Hurricanes Can Do That Are Actually Good
https://weather.com/storms/hurricane/news/hurricane-landfall-benefits-2016
1. Bring Rainfall to Areas That Need It
2. Break Up Bacteria and Red Tide
3. Provide a Global Heat Balance
4. Replenish Barrier Islands
5. Replenish Inland Plant Life

I put more detail in today's worship program.

Now even based on my definition the hurricane did harm to people, many places and many things, but I ask you, Was it an intentional act or a natural event? If natural than it was not evil. It is better defined as a calamity or a natural disaster.

Is it the fault of the "evil" hurricane that people built on the coast line?

In short, I do not think that natural event should be called evil unless they are caused to do harm not any good.

END

Message Scriptures: **Isaiah 45:4–7**