

## **Summary of God and Evil, Episode 6**

### **Motivation When You Hit Rock Bottom | Matthew 6:24 | Emanuel Swedenborg | Are You Addicted to Evil?**

- Two opposing forces can't exist indefinitely in us.
- "Good" is the motivation to act in harmony with the divine design.
- "Evil" is the motivation to act against it.
- One of those is going to end up taking the leadership role in us.
- If we're willing, God will put goodness first with us, but it has to be done at a deliberate pace and with a particular order to prevent evil from taking over the good before the good can become established.
- So this can happen, God stores up truths in our mind to be deployed at the right time.

#### **Reflection questions:**

Do you ever feel your inner struggles as a conflict between a deeper, eternal perspective, and a more surface, temporal perspective?

What happens when worldly and self-focused concerns seem to take the lead? What happens when a long-term, "big-picture" perspective takes the lead?

Have you ever felt that you gained some meaningful insights after a difficult phase?

#### **Related videos to check out on YouTube**

What Temptation Is - Swedenborg and Life

Spiritual Warfare: The Battle Between Heaven and Hell - Swedenborg and Life

Spiritual Fermentation - Swedenborg and Life

Spiritual Detoxing - Swedenborg and Life

How to Free Your Mind From Hell - Swedenborg and Life

#### **Quotes from this lesson in fuller context:**

##### **Matthew 12:25-30**

He knew what they were thinking and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property, without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed the house can be plundered. Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters."

##### **Matthew 6:24**

"No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

#### **Divine Providence 233**

To uncover this secret of divine providence so that rational people can see it in its own light, I need to explain the points just listed one at a time.

(a) At our deeper levels, good and evil cannot coexist within us, so neither can malicious distortion and beneficent truth. These "deeper levels" mean our inner thought processes, processes of which we are quite unaware until we come into the spiritual world and its light, which happens after death. The only way we can recognize them in this earthly world is by a pleasure of love in our outer thought processes, as well as by recognizing the evils themselves when we practice self-examination. This is because our inner and outer thought processes are so closely connected that they cannot be separated, as already noted--there is a good deal about this above.

I speak of goodness and its truth and of evil and its distortions because goodness cannot exist without its truth or evil without its distortions. They are lovers or spouses, since the life of what is good comes from its truth, and the life of what is true comes from goodness. The same holds true for evil and its distortions.

[2] Rational people need no explanation to see that evil and its distortion cannot coexist with goodness and its truth at our deeper levels. Evil is the opposite of good, and good is the opposite of evil; and two opposites cannot coexist. Every evil harbors an intrinsic hatred for everything good, and everything good has an infinite love for keeping itself safe from evil and banishing it from itself. It then follows that neither can coexist with the other. If they were together, there would be at first a violent battle and eventually destruction. This is what the Lord is telling us when he says, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and every city or home divided against itself will not stand. Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me, scatters" (Matthew 25:30 [[Matthew 12:25, 30](#)]). And again, "No one can serve two masters at the same time, for one or the other will be hated or loved" ([Matthew 6:24](#)).

Two opposite elements cannot coexist in one substance or form without tearing it apart and destroying it. If one comes too close to the other, they separate at all costs like two enemy forces, one withdrawing within its camp or fortifications and the other withdrawing outside. That is what happens with evil and good qualities in hypocrites. Both qualities are present, but the evil is inside and the goodness is outside so that the two are separated and not mingled.

This enables us to see that evil and its distortions and goodness and its truth cannot coexist.

[3] (b) The Lord can bring into our deeper levels what is good and the truth that comes from it only to the extent that evil and its distortions have been banished. This is simply a corollary of what has just been said, since if evil and good cannot coexist, goodness cannot be brought in until the evil has been moved out.

"Our deeper levels" means our inner thought processes. They are what we are dealing with. This is where either the Lord or the devil must be present. The Lord is there after our reformation and the devil is there before it. To the extent that we let ourselves be reformed, then, the devil is evicted; while to the extent that we do not let ourselves be reformed, the devil stays in residence. Can anyone fail to see that the Lord cannot enter us as long as the devil is there? And the devil is there as long as we keep the door closed where we are together with the Lord. The Lord tells us in the Book of Revelation that he will come in when that door is opened by our efforts: "I am standing at the door and knocking. If any hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to them and dine with them, and they with me" ([Revelation 3:20](#)).

The door is opened when we banish evil by abstaining and turning from it as hellish and demonic--it is one and the same thing if you say "evil" or "the devil." By the same token, it is one and the same thing if you say "goodness" or "the Lord"; because within everything good there is the Lord, and within everything evil there is the devil. This illustrates the truth of the matter.

[4] (c) If what is good and its truth were brought in before evil and its distortions were removed, or to a greater extent than they were removed, then we would backslide from the goodness and return to our evil. This is because the evil would be stronger, and whatever is stronger wins, eventually if not immediately. Once evil has won, the goodness cannot gain entrance to the inner suite but only to the vestibule, because evil and good cannot coexist, as just noted. Anything that is restricted to the vestibule will be evicted by its enemy who lives in the suite, which means that there will be a departure from goodness and a return to evil, which is the worst kind of profanation.

[5] Further, the essential pleasure of our life is to love ourselves and the world more than anything else. This pleasure cannot be taken away instantly, only gradually; and to the extent that any of this pleasure stays with us, evil is stronger. The only way this evil can be taken away is for our love for ourselves to become a love of service, or for our love of power for our own sake to become a love of power for the sake of service. This makes service the head and for the first time makes love for ourselves, or for power, the body beneath the head, and eventually the feet we walk on. Can anyone fail to see that goodness should be the head, and that when it is, the Lord is present? Goodness and service are the same thing. Can anyone fail to see that if evil is the head, the devil is present, and that since we still need to accept some civic and moral good and even some outward form of spiritual good, these are our feet and their soles, and are trodden down?

[6] Our state of life has to be inverted, then, so that what is on top is on the bottom, and this inversion cannot be accomplished instantly. What gives us the most pleasure of all is what comes from our love for ourselves and therefore for power; and this fades and turns into a love of service only gradually. So the Lord cannot introduce goodness before this evil is removed, or to a greater extent than it is removed. If he did, then we would backslide from the goodness and return to our evil.

[7] (d) When we are absorbed in evil, much that is true can be introduced into our minds and stored in our memory without being profaned. This is because our discernment does not flow into our volition but our volition does flow into our discernment; and since our discernment does not flow into our volition, all kinds of truths can be accepted into our minds and stored in our memories without becoming mixed in with the evils in our volition; so sacred things are not profaned. It is up to us to learn truths from the Word or from sermons, to store them in memory, and to think about them. Our discernment then draws on these truths in our memory, truths we have thought about, to teach our volition, that is, to tell us what we should do. This is our primary means of reformation. As long as these truths are only in our discernment and therefore in our memory, they are not really in us but are outside of us.

[8] We might compare our memory to the ruminatory stomach that some animals have. What they eat goes there; and as long as it is there, it is not really in their body but is outside it. Only as they take it out and ingest it does it become part of their life and nourish their body. The contents of our memory are not physical foods, of course, but spiritual ones. This means that they are truths, essentially thoughts. To the extent to which we have taken them out by thinking, by ruminating, so to speak, our spiritual mind is nourished. It is our volition's love that wants this, that is in its own way hungry, and impels us to draw truths out for our nourishment. If that love is

evil, then it has a longing and a kind of hunger for unclean thoughts. On the other hand, if it is good it has a longing and a kind of hunger for clean thoughts; and if thoughts are unsuitable it sets them aside, dismisses them, and evicts them by various means.

[9] (e) The Lord in his divine providence, however, takes the greatest care that we do not accept it into our volition before we have, in our apparent autonomy, banished evils from our outer self, or do not accept it to a greater extent than we have banished our outer evils. That is, whatever we take into ourselves willingly becomes part of us, part of our life; and in our actual life, the life we derive from our volition, evil and good cannot coexist. That would destroy us. However, we can have both in our discernment. We can have there what we call malicious distortions and beneficent truths, but not at the same time. Otherwise, we would not be able to see what is evil from the perspective of goodness or to recognize what is good from the perspective of evil. However, they are marked off and separated there like the inside and the outside of a house. When evil people think and say good things, they are thinking and speaking outwardly, but when they think and say evil things, then they are thinking and speaking inwardly. If they say something good, then, it is like talking from the wall. They are like fruit that is superficially attractive but wormy and rotten inside, or like the shell of a dragon's egg.

[10] (f) If this were done too early or too fully, then our volition would adulterate the goodness and our discernment would falsify the truth by mingling them with what is evil and with what is false. When our volition is focused on something evil, it adulterates whatever is good in our discernment, and this adulterated good in our discernment is evil in our volition. It convinces us that evil is good and the reverse. Evil does this to everything good that opposes it. Evil also distorts anything that is true, because the truth that is inspired by goodness opposes the distortion that comes from evil. Our volition does this in our discernment as well: our discernment does not do so on its own.

The Word describes adulteration of what is good as adultery and the distortions of truth as promiscuity. This adulteration and distortion are accomplished through specious reasoning by that earthly self that is bent on evil as well as through finding support in the way things seem to be described in the literal sense of the Word.

[11] Our love for ourselves, the head of all our evils, is more adept than any other love at adulterating what is good and distorting what is true. It does this by misusing the rationality that the Lord gives to the worst and the best of us alike. It can actually rationalize things so that something evil seems perfectly good and something false seems perfectly true. What is beyond its power, when it can marshal a thousand arguments to prove that Nature created itself and then created humanity, animals, and plants of all kinds, and that Nature then infused something from within itself to enable us to live, think analytically, and discern wisely?

The reason our love for ourselves is so good at proving whatever it wants to is that it endows its outer surface with a kind of bright, multicolored radiance. This radiance is the love's reveling in wisdom and therefore in rank and power.

[12] However, once this love has become convinced of all this, it is so blind that all it can see is that people are animals and think like animals. It even believes that if animals could only talk, they would be humans in a different form. If for some secondary reason this love has been led to believe that some aspect of us goes on living after death, it is so blind that it also believes that this is true of animals as well, and that what goes on living after death is nothing but some tenuous breath of life, like a mist that eventually returns to its corpse. Either that, or it is something alive with no sight, hearing, or voice--blind, then, and deaf and mute, just flying

around and thinking. There are many other crazy notions as well that the material world itself, which is essentially dead, breathes into our hallucinations.

This is what our love for ourselves does, a love that in and of itself is our love for self-importance; and as far as its desires are concerned, which are all centered on this physical world, our sense of self-importance is very much like animal life. In respect to the perceptions that are prompted by these desires, our love for ourselves is very much like an owl. If we constantly immerse our thinking in our sense of self-importance, then, we cannot be raised from earthly light into spiritual light to see anything of God, heaven, or eternal life.

Since this is the nature of this love, and since it is so ingenious at proving whatever it wants to, it is just as ingenious at adulterating whatever is good in the Word and falsifying whatever is true in the Word if by some necessity it is constrained to confess them.

[13] (g) This is why the Lord does not grant us inner access to the truths that wisdom discloses and the good that love does except as we can be kept in them to the end of our life. The Lord does this to prevent us from falling into the worst kind of profanation of what is holy, the kind I have been discussing in this section. It is because of this danger that the Lord allows evil kinds of living and many heretical kinds of religion. The next sections will deal with the Lord's tolerance of such things.

### **Secrets of Heaven 7166-7168**

“Why is this, [that] you sent me?” means even though the law emanating from the Deity seems to decree otherwise, as the following makes evident: Why is this? means why does this happen when it is decreed otherwise? Moses, who says this about himself, represents the law from the Deity, as mentioned just above at §7164. And being sent means emanating, as discussed in §§4710, 6831. So Why is this, [that] you sent me? means that the law emanating from the Deity seems to decree otherwise.

Because this is said in complaint against molestation at the hand of falsity, it appears as though the law from the Deity decreed otherwise, and that is why I say that it seems to decree otherwise, although it does not really. The Deity's law is the ordained law, and the ordained law for people in a state of harassment at the hand of falsity is that they should be plagued to the point of despair. Unless they reach the point of despair, the infestation fails to achieve its ultimate purpose.

The idea that spiritual trials intensify to the point of despair is obvious from the Lord's trials in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:38, 39; Mark 14:33, 34, 35, 36; Luke 22:44) and afterward on the cross (Matthew 27:46), which lasted till he reached a state of despair. The Lord's trials are a model for the trials of the faithful, so the Lord says that those who want to follow him should take up their cross (Matthew 10:38; 16:24). The Lord's transformation is a model for our rebirth (§§3138, 3212, 3296, 3490, 4402, 5688), and the primary means of rebirth is spiritual trials.

“And ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name” means that when statements in the divine law appeared to demand it of spirits caught up in falsity, as the following shows: Coming to speak means delivering a demand, though here it symbolizes an apparent demand. Demands from the Deity are not delivered explicitly to inhabitants of the hells; rather, they receive lectures through spirits, which appear to them to be demands from the Deity. Pharaoh represents spirits caught up in falsity who inflict persecution, as mentioned in §§6651, 6679,

6683, 7107, 7110, 7126, 7142. And Jehovah's name symbolizes all the faith and neighborly love with which the Lord is worshiped, as discussed in §§2724, 3006, 6674. It therefore symbolizes the whole of the divine law, because divine law is identical with attributes of charity and faith. After all, divine law is divine truth radiating from the Lord, and what radiates from the Lord is divine goodness and truth, divine goodness being love and charity, and divine truth being faith.

“He's done evil to this people” means then spirits governed by religious truth and goodness seemed to be injured by the injection of falsities, as the following demonstrates: Doing evil symbolizes injury through the injection of falsities. Here it symbolizes apparent injury, because no one being persecuted and tested can be injured by the injection of falsities, since the Lord keeps such a person safe. And the children of Israel—the people here—represent those who possess the church's truth and its good qualities, as above at §7162.