



The Living God Ministries, Inc.

Montgomery & Spanish Fort, Alabama

May 29, 2020

We Have a Choice

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, co-workers, and spiritual family on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and scattered children of God, from our offices here in Spanish Fort.

Not a day goes by it seems where something new and/or awful isn't brought to the forefront of our minds and attention drawn to. "What a world!" is a pretty common statement I've either overheard, or said myself.

Years ago I served on a team that answered questions and comments sent in to the then headquarters where I was employed, by individuals who watched their religious television program, or had commented on articles and sermons.

One such question was submitted that is every bit as relevant today as it was back then. The question was, "*How could a loving God allow so much suffering in the world...especially affecting little children in places such as some areas of Africa?*" I still remember a few years back when we heard of the abduction of the 300 Nigerian girls and the likely evil outcome of selling them into slavery and/or forced marriages. Our hearts were burdened and anguished and went out to them and to their families.

Understanding *why* God allows evil in this world involves *understanding the purpose of human life as revealed in the Scriptures*.

God created mankind in His image, with a mind far above that of biological kingdom Animalia. God is preparing the humans whom He chooses, to eventually enter His divine family. There are several steps in this great undertaking.

Man was constructed of the dust of the ground and was made vulnerable to temptation and was capable of and allowed to sin. Sin is the transgression or disobedience of God's instructions given to mankind for his good. Adam was equipped with an intelligent mind and was instructed early on by His Creator about what God expected of him. It is clear that the instructions found in Genesis 2:16-17 (and others that were not recorded) were given very early on to Adam and Eve. The first prophecy in God's Word is clearly laid out in verse 17. Implied in these verses is the freedom of choice to choose to either obey or disobey Gods' instructions and laws.

To accomplish the development of beings who would desire to think like and be like God, mankind was given *free moral agency*. Man has always been given a choice in how he will live, but he also must live with the consequences of those decisions for good or for bad. God has also allowed an evil powerful spirit being, Satan the Devil, to have access to influencing mankind. (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2) In addition we have a nature that is naturally rebellious and lawless and resistant to obeying God's laws. (Romans 8:7)

Because we have freedom of choice and free moral agency, one cannot put a specific percentage on what God, Satan or ourselves are exactly responsible for in the events of our lives. If we yield to certain attitudes and actions, the Adversary is able to influence to a greater degree. There is however, still the overall principle that there are consequences for our choices.

God has consistently worked with His chosen people down through the ages. God instructed Israel, urging them to make right choices with that knowledge and instruction, and then held them accountable for the choices that they made. Deuteronomy 30:19 illustrates how God works. He told Israel, "*I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.*" He didn't predetermine the outcome; they had a choice.

Sure, God *could* forcibly prevent people from sinning, but that would not enable us to achieve the potential that He would like us to. Here's the part humanity struggles with. God desires the best for mankind, a future greater than we could possibly imagine! God is working with our mind, spirit and character. His will is that we learn right from wrong, and that we choose to do right without pressure from Him. We must have "free will" to make those choices; otherwise, we would not develop the character and mind that God desires. Mankind is, and continues writing a painful lesson in his history. If he rejects God and His revealed way, he will reap untold anguish, pain, suffering and curses. So we see that blossoming with each new day on this earth. It's not new, although some act as if is.

Working with us requires an infinite amount of patience on God's part. Like a loving parent, He doesn't want anyone to be hurt. However, like a wise parent, He realizes that as children we need the freedom to make mistakes. Humanly we might conclude that God "keeps His hands off" more than I or you would choose or like. But Gods' ways and thoughts are far above ours (Isaiah 55:9) He is the great equalizer and has the power to resurrect the dead and to heal any hurts that one has suffered. When we lose sight of that, is when things really become muddled and difficult.

Sin brings consequences that are painful and unpleasant. Additionally, one person's sin has an unwelcome effect on others, often hurting them greatly. God also allows Satan to be active in this present world, playing upon the weaknesses of human nature and tempting people to make wrong choices. Humans often try to place responsibility for their personal wrong choices on God and claim that "He is unfair". They'll sometimes also blame it all on the Devil as one comedian used to say "The Devil made me do it!".

I'd like you to consider what Ezekiel 18 records. In this chapter God states, "*Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?*" says the Lord GOD, "*and not that he should turn from his ways and live?*" (v.23) God tells Israel to repent and to turn from transgressions and evil. (v.30-32) A few chapters later, God repeats this appeal, "*Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'*" (Ezekiel 33:11)

Has God left you and me and permanently abandoned us to suffer the consequences of sin? No, He hasn't. He provided us with a way to obtain forgiveness for sin, through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. His plan enables us to develop genuine character at the same time as it provides us with a way to escape the death penalty that sin brings on.

Notice the encouragement from the prophet Isaiah. "*Let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man His thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*" (Isaiah 55:7)

Jesus was asked about the untimely deaths of several groups of people - victims of time and chance. His instruction applies to all those who are willing to trust Him and participate in the process of salvation. ". . .*do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?*" "*I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.*" (Luke 13:4-5)

Friends, may you and I treasure God's mercy and forgiveness upon repentance. Let us value our special calling at this time as we are being prepared to rule with Christ as part of the God family, and bring true peace and offer wellbeing and joy to all.

On these two Feasts of the Lord, the Sabbath, and upcoming Day of Pentecost, we'll again reflect upon what God has revealed, as we are taught, and as we Congregate and Fellowship. Enjoy these special times, knowing a time IS coming when all mankind will no longer suffer...that's His plan you know...

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

(Pastor, *The Living God Ministries Gulf Coast*)

The schedule for this **Sabbath & Pentecost** is:

May 29th / Friday: Evening Praise Sacrifice to welcome God's Sabbath - 6:30 pm (via Teleconference live connect with Stephen Glover and Friends.)

May 30th / Saturday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services - 10:15 am, with services held in **Montgomery and Spanish Fort** at our normal **10:15 a.m.** (with *phone conference connection* available from Montgomery and *Live Webcast* from Spanish Fort). A noon "potluck" meal will be enjoyed and shared with a small group in **Spanish Fort** shortly after worship services.

May 30th / Saturday: Malachi 3:16 Sabbath Fellowship (Interactive Bible Discussion) - **3:30 pm** from Montgomery. (Connecting live with all via telephone conference).

May 31st / Pentecost / Sunday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services - 10:15 am, with services held in **Montgomery and Spanish Fort** at our normal **10:15 a.m.** (with *phone conference connection* available from Montgomery and *Live Webcast* from Spanish Fort). A noon "potluck" meal will be enjoyed and shared in *both* **Montgomery** and **Spanish Fort** shortly after worship services.

May 31st / Pentecost / Sunday: Malachi 3:16 Fellowship (Interactive Bible Discussion) - **3:30 pm** from Montgomery. (Connecting live with all via telephone conference).

Telephone Ministry (English): Call **1-712-770-4700**; then, when asked, enter Code **112165 #** to join.

(Note: All callers are muted and must press ***6** to comment and ***6** to resume mute.)

All times are listed in Central Standard Time zone.

Our Daily Bread Recordings

Sunday through Saturday / Our Daily Bread [listen anytime 24/7 to a recorded 15 minute message] Call 1-712-770-4709 (note this call in number is different and ends in "9"), then when asked, enter code 112165# [reference code numbers are on "Spiritual Fellowship Opportunities" on this website <http://www.tlministriesgc.org> or at "Resources/Archives" on <http://www.haggai114.net>]

Daily Fellowship Opportunities

Sunday – Friday / **Morning Sacrifice** (Prayers & Scripture Reading) at 6:00 a.m.
Sundays / **The Minor Prophets** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Whit, Logan & Friends]
Mondays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Stephen & Moses]
Almond Branch Fellowship at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) (Stephen & Friends)
Tuesdays / **Haggai Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) [Stephen & Friends]
Wednesdays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Stephen & Moses]
1st & 3rd Wednesday / **Sons of God Fellowship** (Young men training) at 6:30 p.m. [Stephen & Friends]
2nd & 4th Wednesday / **Lydian's Fellowship** (Ladies) at 6:30 p.m. [Esther/Gayle/Laura & Friends]
Thursdays / **Mt. Carmel Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Scott & Friends]

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