

Article of the Month  
May, 2021

## ***Why Does God Permit Evil?***

This topic has been treated elsewhere in this website. But the pandemic which has been plaguing the world has renewed an interest in this question. It is always a timely question, but there are times in our collective human experience which renew the question in people's minds if the answer hasn't been settled upon. It almost seems as if certain people would like to use the fact that evil is permitted to impugn the character of God, or to claim that He has inabilities, or even to question His existence. In other words, "If there really IS a God, WHY doesn't He DO something?"

All who know about God know several truths about this question. God does not cause evil. God does not permit evil because He is vindictive. He doesn't permit evil because He is incapable of stopping it. He doesn't permit it because *He* is callous to, uncaring about, or unaware of its terrible consequences. It is also true that His not doing something about it at the moment is no reflection on His greatness, His love, His mercy, or His compassions. God is not at the root of evil. But He CAN use it for good.

### THE ROOT OF THE QUESTION

While it is accurate to say that God "permits" evil, it is not correct to say that He "causes" it. There is a vast difference! The "cause" of the period of evil is two-fold. (1) One of God's creatures (Lucifer) defected from righteousness. THAT was the initial cause of the problem. At that point, evil entered the universe. (2) We (mankind) decided to enter the defection — the rebellion against God. Therefore, WE are very much the cause of evil in our lives.

God ALLOWED this to happen (for good reason). But God is not the author nor the inflictor of evil. Two of His creations are the cause — Lucifer and Man. What we must come to understand is WHY (for what good reason) God allowed it to happen. God DID foresee that this defection would occur. But for reasons we shall see, He KNEW that permitting it would ultimately work for the good of all. (Psalm 76:10 KJV)

### THE "FREEDOM" OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In today's events, we hear multitudes screaming that their "rights" are being violated. (We are not referring to suppressed peoples who have, indeed, had their rights suppressed. We are referring to selfish individuals who want liberties for themselves even if it is at the expense of others.) Unfortunately, mankind, at the moment, has little or no concept of what "rights" or "freedoms" really are. But it should not be difficult for

## *Return to 2021 Index*

any of us to realize that a “freedom” is no freedom at all if it tramples on the freedoms of others. ONLY GOD, in the end, will have the authority and the justifiable right to define “rights” and “freedoms.” He is their Creator; He also will be their Definer. His definitions will not only be flawless, but they will meet with the approval of everyone — once everyone is schooled in the consequences. And THAT is the point of permitting evil. Evil is TEACHING all of us that we cannot control things on our own. We cannot even understand them on our own. We need guidelines. When WE define “liberties,” we inevitably hurt someone. THAT is not true liberty; it is cruelty. It is a lesson we must all learn for eternity. If it is not learned, eternity will be a horror!

It was God’s intent from the beginning that all of His intelligent creatures should be absolutely free to function without undue restrictions. Even in our fallen state, we all crave that kind of liberty. Philosophers call this concept “Free Moral Agency.” What it means is that all individuals are free to do anything and everything they wish BASED ON THE PROVISIO that their own moral sense is strong enough so that their own liberties will not infringe upon the liberties of anyone else.

WHO could possibly define the limits of these liberties? ONLY GOD. Only He knows what might injure another. But He wants to “write” these limitations, these concepts, on the hearts (NOT in written rules) for all of His intelligent creation so that the universe will function flawlessly for the benefit OF ALL. The permission of evil is actually helping mankind want to understand that true liberty will be a wonderful thing — but that it differs from our current definitions of freedoms. Do we not ALL want this kind of liberty? Do we not all KNOW that liberty is a RESTRICTED word? Total liberty or total freedom for the individual without restriction WILL and DOES mean that someone else is going to be injured. What this amounts to is that freedom is NOT just liberty to do what we want without limitations! True freedom, true liberty, true rights, ALL have limitations. Freedom is the ability to bless and be blessed without harming.

## HOW CAN WE LEARN?

Only God has genuine “**intuition**” — the innate ability to automatically KNOW what is good and workable. The rest of intelligent creation learns by **information**, **observation** or **experience**. There are no other ways to learn.

God knew this when He created. He could, of course, (if His character were lacking), have made intelligent beings flaw-proof — incapable of making mistakes or making choices. But if that were the case, these would not be “intelligent creatures” — they would have been automatons or robots. Thinking would be eliminated. Consequently, all of the joys and creativity of the individual would also have been eliminated. God wanted creatures much like Himself — free to experience life in the fullest, but without using that freedom poorly. The permission of evil is teaching us the consequences of poor choices.

*Return to 2021 Index*

Initially, mankind could not learn about evil from **observation** because there was no evil to observe. Thus man was left with only two ways of learning: **information and experience**. God chose to use both. He gave **information** to our first parents. They decided not to abide by that information. By doing so, they opened the door to evil — which God permitted because He saw that **experience** with it would be mankind's best way of learning.

When the Kingdom of Christ soon begins to function to restore mankind to perfection (Acts 3:21), man will be given vast amounts of **information**. As it is written, "The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9 & Jeremiah 31:34) But mankind will also have had a whole history of **experience** which will have taught him the results of disobedience or rebellion. His encounter with evil will have taught him lessons he could in no other way have learned or appreciated so fully. This is WHY God has permitted evil. As horrible as the experience has been, it will work ultimately to set us free — free from false ideas of liberty, free from the likelihood of again being disobedient, free from hurting others, free from being enslaved to ourselves and others, free to live perfectly for eternity. It is a lesson which could be learned no other way. God will have turned a rebellion into a blessing. He will have managed to turn evil (which WE chose) into good (which we all will choose)!

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