

The Pastor's Pages



Vol. 1 Issue 4

It is always encouraging to receive questions that show a true desire to grow in faith and understanding. I received such a question recently which asked, **“God made man-man was given free will-why is it easier for most people to hurt, ignore, or cause suffering than to help and love and unite?”** Indeed, this question is most astounding for it touches each of us in our lives of faith and the struggles that we face in trying to faithfully follow the path placed before us by God.

Many have pondered this question including Martin Luther. Humanity is created in the image of God, but Luther proposed that with the “fall of man,” that humanity lost that perfect image. In his writing, “Bondage of the Will,” Luther proposes that humanity is in bondage to the fallen image of sin now and that without the good that God gives, we may be actually incapable of good. Also, I should point out that even people with no faith at all are still blessed by God and thus, receive goodness that they can pass on. So perhaps, the easiest answer is that people tend to focus so much upon themselves that we like to take the place of God and make all our decisions according to our self-centered will.

Being self-centered is not completely bad, but to an extreme it brings about negative consequences not only to ourselves, but to others. If we consider our own views as always right, then how does that affect other’s opinions, are they always wrong? If we are only concerned with our own well-being we may ignore the well-being of others. You asked why this path is easier. Well, when we only look out for number one then there is only one to look after. However, if we look out for others, loving our neighbors, who does that include? Suddenly, instead of only caring for one we are caring for the rights and concerns of billions. Obviously, that idea is overwhelming, but in truth that is what we are called to do by our Lord. And with the concerns of all people, this is no easy task.

It is much easier to deal with ourselves and our opinions than negotiate the opinions and positions of many people at once. I’m sure you have experienced this in situations where you were called to work with others. Yet, consider what you learn in doing this. Imagine what God deals with considering all of humanity, the stubborn, the inconsiderate, the ones who deny he even exists, etc. We learn something about God and God’s forgiving nature, God’s understanding patience, when we are put into a

similar situation of caring for others. It's not an easy path and therefore, many choose to do the simple thing, to focus on themselves. What comes from that inward focus leads to broken relationships, wars, starvation, etc. Humanity becomes their own worst enemy for we seek our own way instead of God's forgiving way.

The question that follows is why would God allow us to have that much will? Once I was ministering to a husband and wife. The wife had a hole in her heart and was in such a weak state that she could not even stay awake. He tried to wake her when I came, but I begged him to let her rest. I would just visit with him. He asked, "Why is God doing this to me?" "So God is doing this to you? Say more about that," I responded. Well, he's allowing it to happen. I said, "Well, God gives us just enough freedom to royally screw things up." He replied, "I wish he wouldn't give so much freedom."

I then asked him, "Do you remember when you met your wife." A great big smile came to his face. I told him that at that time I imagine that she was all he could think about, he always wanted to be with her every waking moment. He agreed. I asked him to honestly tell me that if he had the power to make her love him would he have done it? He said no, he would want that love to come from her. "Now," I said, "tell me what you just told me about the mind of God?"

You see, it appears that God wishes the same thing, that we love him and for that love to come from us, to not be forced or coerced. But with that ability to love also comes the ability to turn from love or not love. And when we do this and move away from God all sorts of evil things come upon us and it even has effects on those around us, for we do not love them as we are capable to do.

I hope this helps develop your understanding and if there are follow-up questions I'm happy to talk about it, admitting I will not have all the answers, but I worship the one who does.

Shalom,

Pastor Faron