

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Matthew 7:13-14.**
- B. Tonight's question is:
"We have a loving God who knows past, present, and future; yet, the vast majority of His creation will end up in hell. Why?"
- C. I have a 2-fold response to this question:
 - 1. Man's volition made it possible for him to be lost and God foreknew that.
 - 2. Human suffering due to these bad choices can help us better understand the nature of God.
- D. The topic of human sufferings (which is similar to this question) is a weighty one indeed.

I. THE POWER OF CHOICE.

- A. God has chosen to be limited in some ways.
God is omnipotent, omni-benevolent, and omniscient. However, He has decided to limit Himself in certain ways:
 - 1. God cannot be both present and absent and same time.
God cannot create a mountain so big that He cannot move it.
God cannot create a hole so large that He cannot fill it.
God cannot make a square circle or a triangular pentagon.
 - 2. God is limited because it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18).
in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement,
 - 3. God cannot be tempted nor will He tempt and any human (Jas. 1:13).
Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.
 - 4. God cannot look upon or countenance evil (Hab. 1:13).
Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil, And Thou canst not look on wickedness with favor.
 - 5. God has chosen not to force man to serve Him--man must choose that (Jo. 24:15).
"And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."Summary: All this simply means that when God created the universe, He created it in such a way that, His own nature being what it is, made it impossible for certain things to happen.
- B. God created man a creature of volition.
God did not create man as a robot, unable to think and reason for himself. God did give man a precious (and dangerous) gift--the power of choice. That is why there was the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the Garden of Eden. If it were not so, man would have been in an environment where there was no choice available.
- C. When God created man He created him with the freedom of will. Deciding that man should have freedom made it necessary that this freedom include the possibility of not only choosing good but also choosing evil.
- D. When God gave man freedom, then he gave man the freedom to rebel against Him.
- E. When God made creatures of freedom, He opened the door to the possibility of sin, evil and suffering. It could be no other way. When God made the universe, He made it possible for man to use his freedom to find the good or the bad. This inevitability included the possibility of evil and suffering.
- F. My conclusion and answer to tonight's question:
 - 1. God has chosen not to force man to serve Him.
 - 2. God has created man to have the power of choice.
 - 3. Therefore, it is entirely possible that the majority would choose not to serve God.

- G. But I also believe that God foreknew that man would, at one time or another, choose to disobey Him. The Bible speaks of God's foreknowledge in our salvation through X (Eph. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:29).
(Eph 1:3-4) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.
(Rom 8:29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

II. A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO HUMAN SUFFERING.

A. First, we need to remember that God suffers when we suffer.

Our God is a suffering God. He knows and feels our pain. He can understand our suffering through the suffering of X. Sometimes the only way we can learn something is by suffering.

1. In our affliction, God is afflicted (Isa. 63:9a).
In all their affliction He was afflicted,
2. We have a Savior who suffered (Isa. 53:3-7; Heb. 2:10, 17-18; 4:15).
(Heb 2:10, 17-18) For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. 17 Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.
(Heb 4:15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
3. Jesus learned obedience in His sufferings (Heb. 5:8).
Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.

B. Second, we may need to change our concept of God.

If our concept of God is one that says "He is all-powerful and He or we should never therefore suffer"--we need to change that attitude. Hosea suffered over the unfaithfulness of his wife and learned that God was suffering over the unfaithfulness of His people (Israel):

1. God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours (Isa. 55:9).
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts."
2. The secret things belong to God (Deut. 29:29).
"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."
3. All things, good and bad, can be worked out for our good (Rom. 8:28).
And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

C. Third, we may need a better understanding of God's will.

It is not God's will (desire) that people be lost, but His righteous must be satisfied.

1. Some things happen so that God's power might be manifest (Jn. 9:1-3).
And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.
2. Try to give thanks in all things, but not for everything (1Th. 5:18).
...in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

D. Fourth, pray for God to be as gracious and merciful as possible.

When it comes to the eternal judgment we desire mercy, not law. We need grace, not condemnation:

1. With great difficulty the righteous will be saved (1Pet. 4:18).
AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?
2. Pray for who are self-righteous (Mt. 21:31).
"Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The latter." Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you."

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. You have a choice to make. Are you going to serve God?
- B. Jesus said the many will be lost. But you do not have to be in that number. You can freely choose not to be lost and desire to be saved.
- C. Make the right choice--choose God through His Son JC.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring-Xians.