

Death and suffering

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09/20/04

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The last few weeks have been ones filled with death, suffering and destruction.

More than 300 people, many of them children, were killed in a stand-off with Chechen terrorists in Russia. An even greater number of people were injured in that sad incident.

The death toll of U.S. soldiers in Iraq recently went over the 1,000 mark.

We reached the three-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that claimed the lives of almost 3,000 people and even more in the war that pursued.

Then there were also Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Ivan, all ravaging parts of the country, killing a few and damaging the homes of many.

With each incident like these that occurs, many people often find themselves asking why. Why is there so much senseless death and suffering in the world?

Many atheists and agnostics view the fact that such awful things occur as proof that a loving, caring god does not exist. And if there is a god that allows such things to happen, they don't want any part of him. Many others who had at once been very faithful have been turned away from the notion that such a caring superior being exists because of that same logic.

But are there really no answer to the question? Is the fact that there is death and suffering in the world proof that there is really no such loving and caring higher being?

The Bible (I know. Here comes another "holier-than-thou" Christian preaching about the Bible and sinners going to Hell. But, please, hear me out.) does have an answer for why there is death and suffering in the world.

According to Genesis, death and suffering are a direct result of what humans decided to do with the free will that God gave them. Mankind was given the choice to obey God or not. You can guess by the look of things that we chose not to. As a result of that choice to disobey God, the giver of life, we are now suffering the effect of that separation: death. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death" Everything is cursed with death and suffering.

Here's where the non-believer chimes in and says something like, "Yea, but how can a loving god let innocent people suffer and die? If such a god exists, he's certainly not loving, and I'm not going to bow down to him."

First, one needs to look at the premise that there actually exists "innocent" people. The Bible is clear on this; in Romans 3:10 it says, "... there is none righteous, no, not one." By sinning against

God, no matter how small the crime, we have all in effect separated ourselves from the giver and protector of life.

Second, we also need to realize that God gave humans free will. He gave us the choice between doing good and doing evil. Anything less than that choice and the consequences resulting from it, would make us slaves. We would be robots merely following lock-and-step to what God commanded. Where's the morality in that? So, humans like Osama Bin Laden and Mother Teresa both had the choice whether or not to do good or evil. It all hangs on what they decided to do with that choice.

But thankfully there is a way to escape the ultimate punishment of death. Romans 6:23 continues on by saying, "... the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The famous John 3:16 passage makes it clear that we have the choice to call on God's son to forgive us for freely choosing to disobey God, and, as a result, we will "... not perish, but have everlasting life."

That choice to ask for forgiveness, like the one to initially disobey God, is up to us.

Whether or not to believe any of what I have just written is also up to the free will of the reader. You can either choose to believe what I've written as an explanation for the death and suffering we see in the world, or just go on your way and live in constant fear and loathing of when the next terrorist attack or hurricane will happen. Choose wisely.