

A man was thinking and he realized ...

our problems quite logically follow ...

from having the wrong value system!

Values beget choices that beget consequences.

Values, Choices and Consequences

By

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To Those who choose correct values, for the right reason, and live by them.

Introduction

The problems we face as individuals are sometimes overwhelming. The problems the human race faces seem even more daunting. Where do all of these problems ultimately come from and what is their solution? These are the questions this book attempts to answer. In the pages that follow I offer a take as to what is really happening and why.

The value system we actually believe in and hold will determine the choices we make, that is to say our life choices. And those life choices will then produce the consequences we experience. In the pages that follow I share with you my reasons for so believing. Some of the reasons are Biblical and some are based on logical reasoning and life experiences.

As a housekeeping point, the scriptural references, herein, are from the King James Version, KJV, or Modern King James Version, MKJV, unless denoted otherwise. Any emphasis, in the scriptural quotations, is mine throughout this book.

As an additional important note, I have chosen to write the pages that follow mainly in a conversational style. Having said that, let's get started. I offer for your serious consideration and hopeful edification what I have learned below.

Choices and Consequences

From the Christian Biblical perspective, the end of this age does not go well. It does not go well at all. Probably the most famous passage, in the Bible, describing the myriad of problems at the end of this age, is found in Mathew 24, which states in part:

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of **wars**: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be **famines**, and **pestilences**, and **earthquakes**, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."
Matthew 24:1-8, KJV

The above describes tragedy and human suffering on an unprecedented scale and this is described as only the "beginning of sorrows." And all of this is mentioned as occurring right before Christ returns to this earth to rule with power and great glory:

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matthew 24:30, KJV

When Christ returns to this earth to rule, the surviving humans are going to be in a state of shock. They will have just survived the

Antichrist's reign of terror (Revelation 13), wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and God's plagues (Revelation 6, 8, 16 and other places).

After all of the above occurs, what would start the rebuilding process? What message would these surviving humans desperately need to hear? This book is basically my answer to that question. This book is a critical part of what I would initially tell these surviving humans to help start the rebuilding process. And so I thought I would share it with you, dear reader, right now.

First let's turn to Galatians 6:7, which is a very familiar and important scripture:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Galatians 6:7, KJV

Our choices have consequences. A lot of thinking people never take it any further than that, which is, “My choices have consequences.” And if the majority of the people on earth would even take their thinking that far, the world would already start to be a much better place.

But I want us to go to a higher level than that and that higher level is this:

The values and beliefs you really hold will determine the choices you make!

I am not writing of the values you sort of hold, or sometimes believe in. I am writing of the values that you actually believe in and hold, i.e., your core values. Your core values are your value system. For example, if you really value honesty, as part of your core value system, you will not lie and you will not steal.

The choices you make will have tremendous consequences in your life and in the lives of those around you. And those choices will come from your actual value system. The values and beliefs you hold will determine the choices that you make. **You can objectively choose your value system and you should.** Some values are better than others. Not all values are equal.

For example, honesty is better than dishonesty and life is better than death. Can you imagine what would, or could, happen if many people on this earth held death as a value? Then they would go around making choices based on that. And so they would think that

when they killed someone, or themselves, that they actually were doing a good thing.

Have you ever watched the news, or seen needless tragedy up close and personal? And then asked yourself, "How could this happen?" Or, "Why did the offending person choose that way?" It happens because someone somewhere has made a very bad choice. And that someone made that very bad choice because they were not valuing properly. In other words they have consciously, or unconsciously adopted the wrong value system. I contend the bad and sometimes almost idiotic choices that get made are made because the person, making the bad choice, has the wrong value system. The bad values lead to bad choices that lead to bad consequences.

The previously quoted Galatians 6:7 is a great Executive Summary. You are going to reap what you sow. You do not plant corn and reap lettuce. If you make good decisions you will get good consequences. If you make bad decisions you will get bad consequences. It is akin to reasoning soundly from sound premises. You will get the correct answer. But if you reason poorly, or from false premises, you will almost certainly not get the correct answer.

Freedom And Christian Responsibility

Next up I am going to stop and do a sidebar on freedom and Christian responsibility, because we are going to build on this topic a little bit later in the book.

Referring to a future judgment, Revelation 20:12-13 says:

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” Revelation 20:12-13, KJV

In other words we are responsible for our actions and we will be judged accordingly. We are responsible for our life. Our choices will have consequences. There is not going to be any place to hide.

There are a number of scriptures that reference liberty and they are usually linked, rightfully so, with responsibility. One of these is Galatians 5:13, which says:

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”
Galatians 5:13, KJV

I think what the Bible is saying here is that we have been called to liberty, but we must use our freedom responsibly for we will be held accountable for our actions.

1 Peter 2:15-16 says something similar:

“For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.” 1 Peter 2:15, 16, KJV

In John 8:36, it says:

“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” John 8:36, KJV

Further, in Luke 4:18 it says:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,”
Luke 4:18, KJV

God the Father and Jesus Christ expect us to use our freedom responsibly. And there is a reason that we are free and that reason is that God needs freedom to build character in us. He gave us free will, but will not force our minds. He builds character in us through the choices that we make and through his Spirit living in us and working with our minds to help us make the right choices. And I think that he builds character in us one good decision at a time.

The Import Of Our Value System

When we make a bad choice, what lies behind that bad choice? What caused our bad choice? And why do so many people on earth make so many bad choices? The answer is because we hold the wrong value system. And why do we, or did we, hold the wrong value

system? The Bible explains a good part of the answer in the scriptures below:

“And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. ... And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: **But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**” Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17, KJV

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye

die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou

gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of

thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:1-19, KJV

"For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, KJV

When Adam, also on behalf of humanity, ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, I think what he really did is he rejected God's value system and he adopted Satan's value system. And that was the largest mistake that any single man has ever made, because from then on human beings and the societies they formed have made choices based on Satan's value system. And this has led to false religious systems, false government systems, false education systems, false legal/justice systems, false economic systems, bad lifestyle choices, etc., etc. And all of these false systems and bad choices lead to pain, suffering, and death.

Where do really big problems come from? I contend that most really big problems come from fundamental weaknesses, or sins, that compound themselves over a period of time.

Why is the "Great Tribulation" at the end of the age? Because we have now had time to experience 6,000 years of compound sin. It usually starts small, from one bad decision. But the effects of that decision continue to compound and the payoff is pain, suffering, and eventually death itself. It is kind of like a little cartoon character at the bottom of a giant mountain and near the top of the mountain this little tiny snowball gets started rolling. And then it keeps rolling and rolling and rolling and then the cartoon character looks up and says, "Yikes!" He says, "Yikes," because the tiny little snowball is now a gigantic snowball, which is now about to hit him. And that is where the human race is right about now. We have had about 6,000 years of compound sin. And that compound sin is about to have its payoff. And that sin comes from the serpent, Satan. It comes from human beings, through Adam on down, having adopted Satan's value system.

Satan's value system, represented by the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," does have some good that results (God's description and naming of the tree itself), but the evil portion ultimately overshadows any good and the evil portion causes pain, suffering, and then death.

God's value system, represented by "the tree of life," produces the good things that lead to happiness and life.

Many years ago I was baptized into the Christian faith. The scripture that most influenced me to become baptized, was Acts 2:38. Acts 2:38 is a pretty familiar scripture and it is where the Apostle Peter was speaking on the original day of Pentecost.

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
Acts 2:38, KJV

To repent is commonly understood to mean to change. Obviously it does mean to change, e.g., we used to go Satan's way, but now, with God's help, we are trying to go God's way. But, I don't think repent just means to change. Now that I am older I think what is really happening, when you repent, is that you are reversing the decision Adam made for all humanity in your own individual life. You are rejecting Satan's value system, which Adam adopted for all humanity by eating of the tree of the knowledge

of good and evil and you are adopting God's value system, which is represented by the tree of life. And from now on (post repentance) you are going to try to make choices based on God's value system – which is also your newly adopted value system.

I believe that God wants us to freely choose his values and then to consistently live accordingly. It is not easy. I realize it is not easy. The seventh chapter of the book of Romans attests to how difficult it is to lead a Christian life. But until you consciously reject Satan's value system, which leads to death, and adopt God's value system, which leads to life, your life will be even harder. Repentance, properly understood, is a conscious choosing of a different value system to live by.

Acts 3:20-21, quoted below, mentions the restitution of all things.

“And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”
Acts 3:20-21, KJV

The scripture above has been used a lot in terms of God's government replacing Satan's government. That much is true. But it misses something more important, because a government can only do so much. A government can punish wrongdoing and adjudicate disputes, etc. But even God himself cannot use force to make you a better person – even if he uses the power of his government. What this scripture is really talking about is the strength of God's value system triumphing over Satan's value system and the changes that will come from human beings finally adopting the correct value system, for the right reason. Once that happens real and meaningful changes will be experienced and humans will learn to really enjoy life and also to allow others to enjoy it, too.

A new society is going to get built, but not before human beings reject Satan's value system and adopt God's value system.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;” Ephesians 2:19-20, KJV

Setting the cornerstone correctly is the key to building correctly. And the above scripture calls out Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. Since Christ is the cornerstone of this new building, this rebuilding effort, we have to ask ourselves, what does he believe in? What are God's values?

God's Values

Before I tell you what God's values are, I want to rehearse God's plan, his work, and then we will get into his value system, and go from there.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over

every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”
Genesis 1:26-28, KJV

In my opinion, Genesis 1:26-28 is the theme of the Bible. It is a great honor to be made in God’s image.

Next, though, I want to turn back to Hebrews 2:5-11, where we will read about the hero of the Bible, who is Jesus Christ.

“For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.** For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in

bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,"
Hebrews 2:5-11, KJV

Christ, the hero of the Bible, became lower than the angels, experienced suffering and death to redeem men made in his image, so that ultimately God can bring many sons (and daughters) into glory and those sons Christ is not ashamed to call brothers. **That Christ was willing to become lower than the angels and to experience suffering shows who and what he values, which is human beings made in his image and likeness.** God and Christ do not just want us to look like them. They want us to think and act like them – which is to say, to have adopted their value system of life and to live accordingly.

God is having a family and Jesus Christ, the hero of the Bible, was sent on a rescue mission. The entire process takes time as God starts with clay to make human beings, gives us a mind, gives us free will, redeems us from being infected with Satan's value system of the knowledge of good and evil, (which evil portion

leads to pain, suffering, and death), and helps us to understand we should choose and live by God's value system of life. Once an individual human being decides to consciously choose God's value system, rejecting Satan's value system, they can then start to choose based on the correct value system and then that individual's life starts getting better.

So now, what are God's values? God actually answers this pretty succinctly in one verse, which is Psalm 103:7, which says:

"He made known his ways unto Moses,
his acts unto the children of Israel."
Psalms 103:7, KJV

"He revealed his character to Moses and his
deeds to the people of Israel."
Psalms 103:7, NLT

Of course the entire Bible contains God's revelation to man, but it is interesting that God makes a point of explaining that he revealed his ways to Moses. So much for the false dichotomy and teaching that the New Testament displaces the Old Testament. One could also argue that a short form of what God values is

revealed in the "Ten Words," or Ten Commandments.

"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,

I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And

shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Neither shalt thou commit adultery. Neither shalt thou steal. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy

neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's. These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." Deuteronomy 5:1-22, KJV

When Moses said, "and he added no more" at the end of the Deuteronomy recital of the Ten Commandments it sort of goes along with what God said in Psalm 103:7, which is that he made known his ways unto Moses. There are principles, values, behind the Ten Words, the Ten Commandments, that provide human beings a framework (a value system) within which to choose. These principles are eternal. There will be more on this later in the book.

Again, the entire Bible reveals what God values. As a further case in point the Israelites are told something very profound and important in Deuteronomy 30:19.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: **therefore choose**

life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"
Deuteronomy 30:19, KJV

God wants us to choose life. This means we have to adopt God's value system of life because without it, we will be following Satan's value system of good mixed with evil and that evil will overwhelm any good and that evil will produce pain, suffering, and ultimately death. Life is better than death and that is why God told us to choose accordingly.

A New Testament scripture of interest is found in Mathew where someone asked Christ what he had to do to experience eternal life.

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."
Matthew 19:16-17, KJV

Christ, tying back to Psalm 103:7 and Deuteronomy 5, told the man to keep the commandments. I believe a deeper understanding of this is that Christ told him to

consciously choose (adopt) God's value system and then to choose and live accordingly.

Three Aspects Of Character

As another sidebar digression I want to write about three of the main aspects of good character. I realize you could divide character into many more aspects than three, but for our purposes I want to call out three of the bigger aspects of character. And those three aspects of character are attitude, obedience, and judgment.

Of the first, attitude, I believe that most people who are trying to follow God have a good attitude most of the time.

Of the second, obedience, I believe that most people who are trying to follow God try to obey his laws most of the time. We are not perfect and sometimes we make mistakes. I realize that.

The third aspect of character, though, where those who are trying to follow God are probably the weakest, is in judgment. And by judgment I mean decision-making. I don't mean judgment in terms of judging others. And I think the

weakness in decision-making stems from the heritage of the various religious systems that we have been part of. Most of these religious systems are either hierarchical, or they foster an over-reliance on having someone else (usually the minister) think for you, as if someone else can actually think for you. This was and is not conducive to thinking independently and coming to the right decision for the right reason. And so the body of Christ is suffering from not having sufficiently developed good decision-making. And we are also personally suffering from that.

It is not good to be under-developed in terms of making good decisions. As I earlier pointed out, you are responsible for your life's decisions. Since this is the case you might as well make them yourself. You cannot delegate the responsibility for the decisions that you make. You just can't. Ergo, you might as well make the decisions yourself, because the responsibility for them is on you. And because the decisions you make will come from the value system you really believe in, and actually hold, to adopt God's value system is a smart first step to making consistently better decisions. And God will help us to see the wisdom of his values, and to adopt them, so that we make those better decisions – if we allow him.

God's Values, Human Decision-Making, And The Conversion Process

Getting back to God's values again, I want to hit a couple of points in the Bible where God's values, human decision-making, and the process of conversion are all briefly spoken of. The first is in Jeremiah 31:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will

remember their sin no more.”
Jeremiah 31:31-34, KJV

There is a New Testament version of
Jeremiah 31, which is Hebrews 10:

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”
Hebrews 10:16-24, KJV

In Verse 16, where he says, “I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I

write them," I think what he is really saying is he is going to write his value system inside of us. He is converting us from what we are to what he wants us to be. I actually think he is writing his value system inside of us so that we will then start to make the right choices and bear the right fruit, which is to experience the right consequences in our lives. It takes time and it is a process, but I think that is what is happening.

Another important point of the Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 10 scriptures is that when God says "heart" what he really wants is for us to emotionally embrace and love his values. In Hebrews 10, where God says, "mind," I think what he is saying is we should intellectually understand and agree with the principles forming God's values.

God's values produce life without the negative side effects of evil, i.e., pain, suffering, and death. And this is an important reason why God wants us to both intellectually understand his values and to also emotionally embrace them.

What better gift could any of us give our Father in heaven, than to willingly, knowingly, in

a calm moment, adopt what he believes in, adopt what he stands for, that is to adopt his value system? Nothing would make him happier because it is the change he is looking for in our lives. After all, what can any of us really give back to God, who gave us life? What are we going to give him – a shirt?

God's value system generates right choices, which produces good consequences. Satan's value system generates wrong choices, which produces disastrous consequences. And these disastrous consequences are pain, confusion, emotional, mental, and spiritual suffering and ultimately death.

Why is the world such a mess? Because human beings have had thousands of years of experience making choices based upon the wrong value system. But to turn this around, God doesn't want us to obey him simply out of fear. Obeying God out of fear is better than nothing, but only slightly better than nothing. What God really wants is for us to come to the place in our lives where we will obey him because that obedience is a choice flowing from having previously seen the benefit of and having previously adopted God's value system. In other words, we are now doing the right thing at

the right time for the right reason in accordance with our new values, which, in reality, are God's timeless values.

There are a couple of scriptures that call out changing how we think and changing our lives. In Philippians 2:5 the scripture admonishes us to have the mind of Christ in us.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:” Philippians 2:5, KJV

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20, KJV

In Galatians 2:20 we are told that Christ is to live in us. So how is Christ going to live in us, like Satan? It cannot be. Of course Christ in us will not live like Satan. That would make absolutely no sense, none whatsoever. Christ, in us, will live according to God's value system. And in cooperating with Christ as he lives in us, it is important that each of us intellectually understands and emotionally embraces God's value system. Then there is no conflict between Christ and us because we each have the same

value system and we will make the choices that follow from that value system. God is not going to pull any of us kicking and screaming into his eternal kingdom.

Positive Principles And God's Law

God's law is almost always viewed as very negative, at least by most. And I think that even Christians, themselves, have fallen a little susceptible to that same conclusion. It is certainly understandable given the wording of most of the commandments, for example: thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor, etc. However, I think you can look at God's laws positively and you should. And in the New Testament, I think Christ gave a more positive camera angle on the matter. If we turn to Matthew 22:36-40, we can read a more positive phrasing of God's laws:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thymself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Matthew 22:36-40, KJV

So the above is a lot more positive camera angle through which to view God’s law. I think that when it comes to God’s law, either as delineated in Exodus 20, or Deuteronomy 5, or in Mathew 22 above, what God is actually doing is prescribing behavior based on what he values. Again, God, through his law, is doing just that.

For example, God values honesty. Honesty is the principle behind thou shalt not steal and thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, etc. If someone is really honest, they will not lie and they will not steal. And God wants us to be honest. So a more positive way to look at those commandments is to value honesty and to choose to live God’s way, which is an honest life. Honesty is one of God’s core values and it is a positive principle of life. It should be one of our core values.

We are what we do. We are what we think. God himself has values, which he consistently lives by. There is an ongoing counterproductive debate, going on in the Christian community, which comes down to Law versus Grace, or

sometimes argued, or phrased, as Law versus Love. It is a false dichotomy, which stems from thinking at the wrong level. You cannot love God and reject his values (the positive principles behind his laws) because God is what he values and lives by. So are we. And since God wants us to become like him a major part of that conversion process is to choose God's values for the right reason and then to live according to all of God's commands. We love God AND live according to his laws (values) because his values are right. They are correct. They produce and sustain life without the negative side effects of evil.

For someone to say obedience to God and his laws is legalism, or an attempt to earn one's own salvation, is gross ignorance. It is thinking at the wrong level. No one can earn his or her own salvation. Instead, obedience to God should stem from the repentance of having rejected Satan's value system, which produces pain, suffering, and death and the acceptance of consciously choosing God's value system. Once the correct value system has been chosen, of course obedience to God's laws follows because God's laws are based on eternal principles, which form God's value system. We love God because of who he is and what he does. And

who God is and what he does comes from God's value system the same way as our human choices flow from whatever value system we have adopted and are operating under. **God consciously chose his value system and picked the right principles that compose it for the right reasons.** And now we must emulate God in so doing ourselves.

Once the correct value system has been chosen (God's), of course we will keep his laws because like all intelligent beings our choices follow from our value system. And those choices produce the consequences we, and others, experience in our lives.

The "love Apostle," (John), resolved the Law versus Grace, Love versus Law debate in several scriptures:

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."
1 John 2:3-6, KJV

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” 1 John 3:10, KJV

The reason that the Law versus Grace is a false dichotomy, argued from thinking at the wrong level, is because when we repent of our sins and accept God’s grace, we are also repenting of what caused the bad choices (sins) in the first place. And what caused the bad choices (sins) in the first place was living either consciously, or unconsciously according to Satan’s value system. Once we, through repentance, have adopted God’s value system we will now make the choices that flow from God’s value system. And that means we will keep his laws, which show us how to love God and our brother made in God’s image. Which is why the Apostle John, quite logically above, said “whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” John said you had to do both, i.e., do righteousness (keep God’s law) and to love your brother. In reality, they are the same thing, which is living according to the correct principles, which is living according to God’s

value system. There simply is no conflict, properly understood, between Law and Love.

Neither is there a conflict between Grace and Law. This is because accepting God's generous grace to save our lives also encompasses adopting God's value system at that same moment in time - whether we realize it at that moment in time, or not. And once we repented, accepted God's freely given grace, and have adopted God's value system we will then make choices accordingly, which means we will keep his laws which detail real world applications of the principles forming God's value system. Most big disagreements stem from either having opposing value systems, or from thinking and arguing at the wrong level. Opposing value systems could also accurately be characterized as a conflict of visions.

God objectively chose the principles forming his value system and he did so for all of the right reasons. Life is better than death. Honesty is better than dishonesty. And God's value system produces life and what is necessary to sustain life. Satan's value system produces evil, pain, suffering, and death. We should follow God and choose his value system

for all the right reasons, such as to become like God and to have real life.

Why does God love David so much? It is because David loved God's law and thought about it all day long.

"O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day." Psalms 119:97, KJV

David loved God because of the qualities of God's character - God's love, faithfulness, honesty, deliverance, grace, etc. And David knew that what God valued he gave to Moses (Psalm 103:7 previously quoted). So David, in loving God, thought about God's law. He thought about the principles behind God's law and how to apply them in his life, i.e., in the context of his situation. David knew that you could not love God apart from God's value system because God is his value system. To attempt to do so would be a ridiculous non sequitur. David loved God. David loved God's value system and so should we. And God loved David for so doing.

After David's sin with Bathsheba, he begs God as follows:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and
renew a right spirit within me.”
Psalms 51:10, KJV

David wanted reconciliation with God
because he loved God and because David knew
he was wrong. God accepted David’s prayer and
the relationship was restored.

God will accept us as well. God wants us to
come to the place in our Christian lives where
we will understand what the right thing is. You
learn what the right thing is from meditating on
the eternal principles behind God’s value system
and thinking about how to apply those eternal
principles in the context of our situation. God
wants us to come to the place where we will do
the right thing at the right time for the right
reason. The only way we can do so is to, of our
own free will, adopt God's values as our own.
And it helps to understand there are positive
eternal principles behind God’s law and that
there is no Law versus Grace, or Law versus
Love dichotomy, properly understood.

God's Word And Conversion

Now I am going to do another little sidebar talking about the word of God and how it helps with the process of conversion.

We live in a digital age where the variety and quantity of electronic tools and gadgets is almost mind-boggling. Each of these products are electronic products and the hallmark of any electronics product is that it includes a printed circuit board. The printed circuit board has channels for electric current to flow through that are made via etchings that are manufactured onto the circuit board. Those etched channels, that are now part of the printed circuit board, allow the electric current to flow.

Remember in Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 10:16 where God said he would place his laws into their inward parts (hearts) and also into their minds? Perhaps this is a bit of speculation on my part, but I believe that what happens when we study God's word is that God is etching some new channels and paths for his Holy Spirit to flow through. We are actually aiding God in the conversion process by studying what he values and thinking about it. We are giving God

a few more tools to work with, because we understand his word a little bit more.

The same thing holds true for prayer. When we pray more, even if we are not sure what to pray for, God's Holy Spirit can make up the difference. That is what it says in Romans 8:26-27.

“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”
Romans 8:26-27, KJV

I think when we study God's word, and we pray, we are taking in more of his Holy Spirit. I think his value system is being etched inside of us and he will be able to express Himself more through us, i.e., to flow through us more.

In agriculture, the more fertile the ground is, the more fruit that can be born. I think there is a reason why people who study more and pray more seem to be more converted and that's

because they probably are more converted. They have simply taken the time and effort to work with God in the conversion process. They are making the ground of their own hearts and minds more fertile for God.

Below are a few scriptures that seem to touch on the point I am trying to make:

“For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” Isaiah 55:10-11, KJV

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.” 1 Thessalonians 2:13, KJV

God is using his word in the conversion process. **And his word contains his value system.**

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
Hebrews 4:12, KJV

So we can participate with God in the conversion process through studying his word and through prayer. And when you are studying God's word, ask yourself a few questions: What does God believe in? What does God value? What eternal principle is being illustrated? What is really happening here? How can I become more like God? How can I let him work more in my life? How can I move farther away from Satan and his evil value system, which produces pain, suffering, and death?

Some Historic Decisions

The Bible contains numerous historic examples of some really bad decisions that were, of course, based on an incorrect understanding of what was valuable.

For example, Judas sold out Jesus Christ for 30 pieces of silver (Mathew 26:14-16). His

choice was The Creator of the Universe, the hero of the Bible, versus 30 pieces of silver. And he chose the 30 pieces of silver. Wow! That was a whopper of a bad decision. Judas was not valuing properly.

Esau sold his birthright for some lentil soup (Genesis 25:29-34).

Samson's valuation of Delilah caused him a lifetime of grief and ultimately death (Judges 16).

Paul, when he was Saul, killed Christians (Acts 8:1-3 and Acts 9:1-2). But something happened on the road to Damascus where Saul became Paul (Acts 9:3-22). Later, of course, he became a major force throughout the world in terms of persuading men to change their value systems. Christ explained why he appeared to Saul in Acts 26:16-18:

"And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering

thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts 26:15-18, KJV

The conversion of Saul to Paul is a radical change of value systems. Christ himself described it, above, as "to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

Why did Saul kill Christians? When you think about it, who thinks it is good to kill Christians, God or Satan? If you follow a decision back to its source, you can determine the value system behind the decision. And, if you think more about it, you can uncover who is behind that value system. It is either the Creator God, the protagonist of the universe, or Satan the Devil, the antagonist of the universe. Jesus Christ, gave this important information about Satan:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He [Satan the devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in

him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

John 8:44, KJV

Satan's values encompass death and fraud for he is a murderer and a liar. God's values encompass life and honesty. When it is put as simply, as truthfully, and as clearly as this, the choice is clear. Unfortunately, many bad choices are made because men do not consciously choose their value system and then live accordingly.

Next I want us to review some good historic decisions that are, of course, based on valuing correctly.

Abraham left his home and his country (Genesis 12), and he was also willing to sacrifice Isaac for his belief in God (Genesis 22). His relationship with God was worth more to him than anything else. His relationship with God is what Abraham valued; that is how he lived his life; and that is why he is the father of the faithful (Galatians 3:6,7,29).

Noah built the ark and preached righteousness for 120 years. And in so doing he and his family were saved by God (Genesis 6-8).

Noah knew what to value and he acted accordingly.

Joseph fled an "opportunity for adultery" and got thrown in jail for it (Genesis 39). But it did not deter him from continuing on until God delivered him and he ultimately ended up being the de facto ruler of Egypt and saving his family.

Everyone mentioned in Hebrews 11 - the "Hall of Fame" could also be mentioned for their historic good decisions. All of these Bible heroes made courageous decisions and took action. Why? I think it's because they knew what to value. They made the correct choices because they knew what to value. They had previously and consciously adopted the correct value system and when they encountered their time of testing "moment of truth" it made all the difference.

You Are Valuable To God

God gave us the honor of making us in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). Sometimes, though, because of the stresses and cares of life and all of its battles, we get worn down to the point where we are not so sure we are valuable to anyone, including ourselves. But you are

valuable and especially to God. To be clear, the Creator God, himself, values you.

Each one of us, by way of our background, our education, our genetics, our aptitude, and our individual life experiences, are unique. There is quite literally no one on earth like you. There is no one in history like you. There will be no one in the future like you. Each of us is, in point of fact, unique.

What this means is that even after we repent of our sins, change value systems, become converted, and receive God's Holy Spirit - even if the Holy Spirit received was the exact same for each one of us - there was no variation or difference, we would still be unique after the receipt of that Holy Spirit because we started out as unique individuals. So we are absolutely unique in the entire universe. There literally is no one like us. And that is true for each and every one of us.

Further, it seems to indicate in Romans 12:6 that we have gifts differing according to the grace given us and in I Corinthians 12:4 that there are differences in divine gifts, but the same Holy Spirit. It sounds to me like God gives each of us a unique spiritual seed - which

is to say a unique spiritual begetting from God. In other words, if we each got the same exact spiritual seed, then how is that we have different spiritual gifts?

No matter whether we got a unique spiritual seed, or not, we still end up being unique because we all started out different. We each have our own backgrounds, genetics, temperament, life experiences, etc. To use a mathematical example, if A and B are unequal and then we add an equal amount, C, to each, $A + C$ is still unequal to $B + C$. How God actually does all this, is not clear. But there is no question that each of us is unique in the entire universe. And it is highly likely that not only do we start out different from each other, but that we also receive different spiritual gifts upon conversion, thus making us even more distinct as individuals, post receipt of the Holy Spirit.

If you will permit me a little latitude to use an example from economics, whenever there is a shortage of something, the value always goes up. And there is only one you.

So now let's draw some conclusions from the fact that we are all unique individuals, who are all valued by and valuable to God. And, of

course, all of the below conclusions are obviously within the framework of thinking, speaking, and acting within the context of God's value system.

It is okay to think differently than how other people think. You are free to think differently than others. Just remember, that whenever I write about freedom, I always add the three words, "and Christian responsibility," to anchor us so as to not drive off the intellectual cliff and crash on the rocks below.

It is okay to serve differently from how other people serve.

It is okay not to conform to each other. Our goal is to conform to Jesus Christ. It is written in Philippians 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." You can be your own person. You can blossom in your own way. And I think God is very interested in you doing just that.

In other words, you are unique, special, priceless, and in point of fact, irreplaceable. Each one of you is literally irreplaceable.

So what does God really value? He values you. He values each one of us. We are his workmanship. What is the creator of the universe doing these days? He is working on us. God's work is you and I. That is his work.

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."
Ephesians 2:10, KJV

God is creating a family. We can be part of it, as mentioned in Romans 8:29 and elsewhere:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Romans 8:29, KJV

In addition to noticing the "firstborn among many brethren (brothers)" above also note that we are to be conformed to the image of his Son. This, of course, requires us to adopt God's value system of life, honesty, productive work, and all of the other principles outlined in God's word, the Bible.

God values each of us so much that the Word (John 1:1), Jesus Christ, became flesh on

a divine mission to do, what? He came to rescue us. He came to save us. Why? Why would God take that kind of risk? Because he thought it was worth it, that's why. God is not stupid. God took that kind of risk because it was worth it to him to take that kind of risk, because he loves us. Specifically, he loves you. You are valuable and irreplaceable to God. Don't lose sight of the fact that you are God's workmanship and that you are precious and priceless to God. He values us. And he chooses and acts accordingly.

If God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ can do what they have done for us, what can we do for them? Are we going to give them a shirt? How about a nice watch? Is that what they want from us? That is not what they want. What they really want is for us to thoughtfully, willingly, from both the mind and heart, embrace their value system and to the best extent possible live by it.

"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I

look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”
Isaiah 66:1, 2, KJV

“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Micah 6:8, KJV

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Amos 3:3, KJV

Those are the kinds of things that God wants from us. You cannot walk humbly with someone and in agreement with someone if you don't have the same value system. You just cannot.

Changing The Universe

Each of us has made our share of bad decisions. And those bad decisions have produced bad consequences. But we can turn things around with God's help. God wants each of us to adopt his value system and to use our mind and our freedom, within the context of his laws, to make better decisions going forward. Once we start making better decisions, we will experience better consequences.

I have noticed that there is kind of a malaise in the world, especially among young people, but it has also affected Christians. And that malaise is this: It doesn't matter what I do. I am only one person. We are all on a boat in a fast river that is about to go over the waterfall, where we will all be smashed on the rocks below, or something to that end. There is a definite malaise out there and it has infected people both in and out of the church.

Unfortunately, that kind of thinking is pagan, fatalist, and determinist, and it is not correct. It is not the right way to think. In fact, it's wrong thinking at close to its worst. The reason this kind of thinking is so wrong and so dangerous is because the truth of the matter is that each one of us can make the entire universe a better place, with our next decision, if we choose correctly. It might be a real incremental gain. That much is true. But each one of us can make the entire universe a better place if we choose correctly when making decisions. And we will certainly make our own lives better by choosing correctly. There are no shortcuts, or ways to get around fundamental principles. We cannot make a bad decision and get a good result. No one can.

How else does this mess on earth (the effect of compound sins) get turned around, but by the masses, including each of us, learning how to think differently? All of us have to learn how to value things differently. And all of us have to learn to choose better. And then we will have better results, but not before that.

I think God the Father and Jesus Christ monitor our every decision. You were born to win. Start choosing accordingly. You were, I was, and all of us are, born to win. Your next decision can make the entire universe a better place. Decide wisely.

Your Freedom And Your Life

This next portion of the book centers on life choices, that is to say, physical choices and physical consequences. I am not sure if God has a definite, unique, spiritual plan for each of us. He probably does for some. And maybe he does for all, I don't know for sure. The possibility of God having a spiritual plan is not what I am writing of here. The question I want to address pertains to whether God has a definite plan for your physical life. And I am pretty certain he does not. Perhaps you have heard or thought differently, as I know some

men have taught that God does have a physical plan for your life. But, I can't find it in the Bible. And that has not been either my experience, or observation.

My main reason for believing that God does not have a specific physical plan for your life is because God has given us free will and with free will comes the ability to make choices for ourselves. Of course, God wants our choices to be within the context of his value system, but other than that he leaves us free to choose. We are free to choose within the context of his law. And when we make our life choices, they will have consequences and our life will start to form.

Now, obviously there were some exceptions. Noah was probably chosen for a reason and God, in essence, dictated a great part of his physical life. The same thing could be said of Abraham. Most of us aren't Noah and Abraham. And even Noah and Abraham were allowed to make many of their physical life choices as they wished. God allowed it.

Since you have the opportunity to make choices, as pertains to your life, you will want to choose wisely, because you will directly

experience the consequences. For example, if you have a decision to make about whether you should move to Manhattan, or continue to live in rural Iowa, the consequences will be felt by you. Do you want to live in Manhattan, or in Iowa? The result of that choice will be a completely different lifestyle, as city life in Manhattan is very different from farm life in Iowa. Both choices could be completely within God's law.

If you decide to get married, or stay single, the choice will have consequences for your life. Being married is very different from being single, with many more costs and obligations, as well as different benefits. If you get married it will markedly change your life. You don't have to marry if you don't want to. You can if you do want to.

As much as marriage changes your life, if you decide to have children, it will really change your life. And if you have a lot of children, it will really, really change your life.

If you decide to go to college, or not, or start a business, or not, these are all choices that you can make. Each of these choices will have consequences you will directly experience in your life.

Sometimes when we are faced with a decision, we don't know what to do. And we are apprehensive because we know the decision will have its consequences. Many times, when this happens, a Christian will pray for guidance, asking for divine help in making the decision. But sometimes, even after prayer, we are still not sure what to do. We do not have a clear indication of which way to go, that is what to decide. My personal feeling is that if we ask God to show us what would be better, and we don't get an answer on some physical matter, perhaps what God is saying is, "You are free to choose."

Why am I even bringing this up? Well, part of this book's title is *Choices and Consequences*. And because I understand people, I know for a fact that some of you who read this book are unhappy with your physical life circumstances and you are blaming God. As an author I don't have any idea who will ultimately read this book, but I know enough of life and have experienced enough personal hardship to know how human beings react when hurt. And I know that Satan has gotten to each one of us at some point in our lives. Nobody makes it through the minefield of this life unscathed. Each of us

made some bad personal decisions. Each of us has wasted months, or years of time going down box canyons, or blind alleys. And each one of us has experienced the hurtful spillover effects from other people's bad decisions. It is painful. All of the above is very painful.

If you feel this way, about the only advice I can give you, because I have wrestled with this personally, is to not blame God for your physical life, but do give him credit for your spiritual life. I don't know how to say it any other way than that. Don't blame God for your physical life, but do give him credit for your spiritual life.

Satan has gotten to each of us, and he has gotten to mankind, and we are all suffering as a result. If you have chosen to be a responsible and caring person, who is trying to develop into the best that you can be, you have a full-time, lifetime job ahead of you. That would be hard enough. Unfortunately, a larger problem looms and that larger problem is that even though we have made the decision to try to live our lives on the highest plane possible, seven billion other people have not yet made that decision and the results of their bad decisions flow over into our lives making our life much harder than it

otherwise would have to be. This can be and is very frustrating.

The truth is, however, that all you can control is your own life. All I can control is my life. I can't control seven billion other people and neither can you. We just can't. All any of us can do is to start making better choices ourselves and hope that everyone else will ultimately do so as well. There is no shortcut, I am aware of, to having a better world. And at least by making better personal choices, in our own lives, we will experience the best consequences and results that are currently possible.

Because we are human, we make mistakes. As Christians, we wish we were immediately perfect, but we are not. And when we make mistakes, or sin, we can be very hard on ourselves and then we feel guilty, or foolish, or even worthless. And sometimes we have a hard time forgiving ourselves. None of us can change the past. And unless we want to tie ourselves to a past, where something went really wrong, we have to learn to forgive both ourselves and others. **The past cannot change, but we can.** Once we have learned from our mistake and repented of our sin and said, "I am truly

sorry," then we have to put down the baggage of the past and move on. It is hard enough to climb the mountain of life without carrying the weight of needless baggage.

In Romans 8 there are a couple of classic scriptures to provide hope and comfort for Christians struggling with the past.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:1, KJV

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28, KJV

We don't stand before God and Jesus Christ condemned. So quit condemning yourself. Quit blaming God for your physical life. All of us have made mistakes, which consequences we have to bear, and now we have to go on making the best decisions possible from here on out.

This physical life, while very important to us now, is only temporary, and basically functions as a training ground. In it, we will make some

good decisions and we will make some bad decisions. And our best chance at making the best possible decisions is to adopt God's value system and then to choose accordingly thereafter.

Again, forgive yourself and others for the part of your physical life that you are unhappy with; remember that you are priceless and valuable to God; know that you are irreplaceable, spiritually speaking; and believe that you were born to win and you will with Christ's help. And in striving to win, one of the most important things you can do, to ensure your ultimate spiritual victory, is to calmly, willfully, and knowingly adopt God's value system. Then, when you make your choices, as best as you can, through Christ living in you, you will have your best chance of success. Stay the course and you will win.

Some reading this might think, "It is too late for me." No, it is not.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:"
Philippians 1:6, KJV

If you still want to win, it is not too late. We should want to win. Remember in Deuteronomy 30:19, where God said, "Choose life." Give yourself a chance. Choose to not give up. Choose life. Choose God's **values**. And then start making good **choices**, according to God's value system, which is also now your value system. The good **consequences** will follow.