

# THE LOWER LIGHTS

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**"Brightly beams our Father's mercy  
from the lighthouse evermore;  
But to us He gives the keeping  
of the lights along the shore."**

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## **IF THERE IS A GOD, WHY?: GOD GAVE MAN CHOICE**

September 11. If there is a God, why? Why the sudden tragic end of thousands of innocent lives in Pennsylvania, New York City, and Washington D.C.? Nearly the whole world has condemned the actions of the terrorists and the war against them has been labeled a war that is "Good vs. Evil".

When we think of God, words such as "Almighty" (All- Powerful) and "Sovereign" (Ruling with Supreme Authority) come to mind. When such horrific evil is seen such as on September 11, unbelievers may become more rooted in their unbelief and believers may be filled with doubts, both asking, "If there is a God, why do such evil things happen? Why would He not exert His Power and Authority to prevent them? However the tragedies of September 11 have affected your thoughts of God, won't you examine the Bible answer to this important question?

First, we need to reword our question, to broaden its scope to include all who do "evil" in the sight of God. Paul wrote, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). All men have broken the law of God, some men more than others and some with more damaging consequences to their fellow man. Nevertheless, all men are contributors to a world of moral evil.

We therefore should not be made to wonder about the control of God only in the face of horrific crimes. The question should not be, "Why does God allow a few terrorists to go on a killing rampage, but why is all mankind allowed to do evil if God exists? I must look in the mirror and ask, "Why am I allowed to do evil, if God exists?" "Where is God's control over me?"

The answer is found in God's creation of man. When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He told them they could eat of every tree but one, the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:15-17). We conclude that God made man a creature of choice. He did not make man a computerized robot, programmed to do his will. Had He done so, man would not have been able to do evil, but would have lived totally righteous under God's total control. But, by the way God made man, He chose to give up some "control" and so evil became a possibility.

God has placed man in a "controlled struggle" to see whether or not he will choose to obey Him. Though God Himself does not tempt man (Jas 1:13), He allows Satan to tempt man (Gen 3:1-5), and has given Satan three avenues by which to lure man; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 Jn 2:15-17). God has made men vulnerable, susceptible to sin, creatures that will sin unless they fight against temptation.

However, God is in charge and regulates the process. Satan must have God's permission to tempt (Lk 22:31-32) and God controls the extent of the temptation so that man is not tempted above what he can bear (1 Cor 10:13). Thus, man is not forced to sin and cannot blame God, but only himself if he does sin (Jas 1:13-15). So, the horrendous acts of September 11 and all other sins are the result of man's lack of control and not God's and do not cast doubts on His Power and His Authority...

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## IF THERE IS A GOD, WHY?: CONTROL THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY

...Though God has allowed man to sin, He has maintained control over him through accountability. All the terrorists connected with September 11 may never be brought by man to justice, but one day, each one of them, as each man who has ever lived, must "give account of himself to God", and be "recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (Rom 14:12; 2 Cor 5:10)

Adam and Eve were allowed to rebel against God's commandments, but they paid dearly (Gen 3:16-19, 22-24). God did not stand in the way of Cain killing Abel, but Cain suffered the consequences of his sin the rest of his life (Gen 4:10-12). When the world became evil, God brought the Flood (Gen 6:5-7), fully separating the good from the evil.

However, after the Flood, God promised that while the earth remained, He would not interrupt the natural order of things again by a worldwide judgment (Gen 8:20-22). However, since the Flood, God has intervened to punish individuals (e.g. Nadab and Abihu- Lev 10:1-3), cities (e.g. Sodom and Gomorrah- Gen 19:23-28), and nations (e.g. Babylon- Isa 13).

But, God's judgment has not always been immediate. So man has wondered if God is in control. Does He see what is going on and, if so, is He going to do anything about it? God's reply has been that He will arise from His "short nap" and destroy the sinner (Ps 73, esp vs. 17-20). He has a "book of remembrance" and He will distinguish between the wicked and the righteous (Mal 3:13-4:3).

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As a farmer lets the wheat and the weeds grow together until harvest and then separates them, so God allows the wicked and the righteous to live in this world together until His appointed time of judgment. Then the righteous will receive eternal blessings, while the wicked will be sent to eternal torment (Mt 13:24-30, 36-43). The judgments which God has already sent should more than convince us that all men are accountable and on that great Judgment Day will face the consequences of their actions (see 2 Pet 2:3-9, Jude 5-7).

God planned before He made the world to have sons who would choose to be conformed to the image of His Son. These would not be righteous by their own actions, as they, as all men, would do evil. But, they would accept the call of the gospel and be justified (counted "righteous") by the blood of His Son. They would choose to become sons of God and grow to become like His Son, that by His grace, mercy, and love, they might be glorified rather than condemned at the Day of Judgment (Rom 8:29,30). These sons of God would be to the "*praise of His glory*" (Eph 1:12,14). This could not be said of them if God had made them robots with no choice between good and evil and no struggle to do good, rather than evil.

In the face of the evil of September 11, and in the face of our own evil, let us lay aside all skepticism and doubt. God exists. He is Almighty. He is Sovereign. He is Just. The terrorists will give account to Him. So will we. Are we His sons? Are we living to His praise or to our condemnation?

