

Society's Individuals

"Every normal man must be tempted at times to spit upon his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats." – *Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956)*

I live in the USA, in the State of Colorado, where we have a town named *Paradise*. However, ours is not the only state with a *Paradise*. All 50 states have a place called *Paradise*. I think the majority of people would like to live in a trouble-free situation – *here and now*. But what would make it paradise – the place or the people, the real estate or the relationships, society or the individual? We misguidedly concentrate on creating perfect *environment*, when our problem is within us. Imperfect individuals cannot create a perfect environment. Nevertheless, society's needs must never be met at the expense of the individual's freedoms.

What can be done with our inherent human evil that can quickly transform an idyllic valley into a bloody battlefield? What can we do with the dark side of our human nature? Can we close our eyes to our own conflicting personality traits? Can we rid ourselves of our nagging worries and of our deep-rooted two-facedness? Socrates said: "In all of us, even in good men, there is a lawless wild-beast nature, which peers out in sleep."

And Nobel laureate Alexander Solzhenitsyn observes: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

Initially, we were created to live in Paradise. (See Genesis 2:8.) The time will come when a certain category of individuals will enjoy care-free, fear-free, pain-free wholeness and the undisputed but welcome benevolent sovereignty of God. For now, however, according to God's agenda, *this is the way it has to be*.

Generally speaking, God will not stop us from living our lives as we please. *But he does reserve the right to limit, control and even preempt our actions whenever and however he chooses*. (See James 4:13-16.) He permitted Joseph's jealous brothers to sell him into Egyptian slavery (See Genesis 37:28); but by the time the predicted seven-year famine came, Joseph was in a position to save the lives of all the Egyptians and also the lives of those same brothers. Joseph then told them, "*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives*" (Genesis 50:20).

For better or for worse, we humans are not automatons; nor does God subjugate us against our will. He respects our free will. We have been given the ability to choose, to decide, to act *and* to enjoy or suffer the consequences of our beliefs, our philosophy of life and of our conduct. (See Genesis 2:15-17.) But, let us not forget for a moment that the other side of the free-will coin is personal, individual responsibility and accountability to our Creator. ◇◇◇