**Prelude!**

**The In - Between!**

*“We know that we are children of God, and that the* ***whole world*** *is under the control of the evil one.”* (I John 5:19 (NIV)

*“The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for* ***it has been given to me****, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So, if you worship me, it will all be yours.”* Luke 4:5-6 (NIV)

**Let’s start at the beginning:** At some point in your life, I’m sure that you have heard someone or even you yourself have said, “I can’t wait until things get back to normal!” Well, that is not going to happen! This is it! This world as it is will never be normal! Normal is a false notion. And, “OH” by the way there isn’t any such of thing as a “new normal”! Why? Because this is an imperfect world! The life we live on this earth is far from perfect and it is far from what God intended it to be in every single area! Normally was the Garden of Eden! That is what God created – and that was what He intended for us!

When God spoke the world into being it was truly a Paradise. It was perfect! Adam and Eve lived a God ordained life in a God ordained world – for a while. There were no storms, no earthquakes, no tornados, no hurricanes – all was perfect! The grass was green year-round; the flowers and the foliage were always in beautiful unimaginable colors! The temperature year-round was stable, mild, and very pleasant! Flowers didn’t die; leaves didn’t fall from the trees! Why? God had not ordained that anything including mankind should die! There was no sickness, no disease, no death, no struggles for existence, no hatred, nothing but Peace on Earth! It was all **perfect!**

**Most of all** mankind’s relationship with God was perfection! The Complete Jewish Bible says in Genesis 3:8: “*. . . the voice of Adonai, God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze . . .”* - in His own special way God visited with Adam and Eve each day! Everything was - Amazingly Perfect!

**Important Fact:** At this point in human history – God was in *total control* of everything – absolutely in control of this world. He was in control of the beginning and the end and the - **in between**!

Also, at this point Adam and Eve wanted nothing because all their needs were being met! God had even spoken into place their Divine Right to have their own free will – the right to choose and make their **own** choices.

Now, keep in mind Adam and Eve knew that God had only asked one thing of them! There was only one **“don’t do this”** from God in their life at this point. Plus, God had even told them the reason why He asked them not to do this one thing – they knew! “. . .the LORD God commanded the man, *“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”* (Genesis 2:16-17) NIV

**One day:** After entering the garden posing as a serpent Satan met up with Adam and Eve. When he did, he immediately began his subtle lying, and his subtle manipulation! In John 8:44 Jesus told us that Satan is a liar – in fact Jesus said that lying was Satan’s *native language* because he is the father of all lies! Now Satan had a question he wanted answered all the while knowing the truth! Satan was setting up Adam and Eve for failure in more ways than can be imagined! By their choices to listen to Satan and follow his word instead of what God told them - they were going against the Word of God and in so doing they declared that God hadn’t told them the truth!

**Satan’s motive:** He wanted to be in control of the world in other words he wanted to be King of the World!

**Satan set his plan into action: “**Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” *The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ “You will* ***not*** *surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the* ***eyes of both of them were opened,*** *and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves*.” (Genesis 3:1-7) NIV

**The moment their eyes were opened control of the world had been given over to Satan!**  Satan got what he wanted just as quickly as that! Satan was now in control of the whole world! Hundreds of years later after Jesus was baptized Satan reminded Jesus, he (Satan) was in control of the world . . .

*“The devil led him (Jesus) up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.  7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours.” (*Luke 4:5-6) NIV

All because of their wrong choice’s death, sin, pain, sorrow, and struggles to just exist and so much more entered the world! The concept of *“wanting more”* entered the world at this point! In a split second their choice was made, and God could not and would not stop them – because He couldn’t take back their right to make their own choices! God had given them and all mankind in the future the right to make our own choices – our own free will! This one rebellious choice of Adam and Eve took God out of control of the whole world!

**Facing God***: “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (*Adam and Eve knew instantly that something was very wrong, and they had blown it! They were experiencing guilt and shame! Thus, **guilt and shame** were now a part of the world!)

*“But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you*?” (He (God) knew exactly where they were and what had happened!) *He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so, I hid.” And he said,* ***“Who told you that you were naked?*** *Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? (W*hen God asked this question ***“the blame game”*** came into being!) *The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”* *Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

When Adam and Eve made their individual choices to disobey God and listen to Satan, they opened the door wide for Satan to move in and take his position (for now) as: *“. . . The god of this age . . .” (II Corinthians 4:3a)* (NIV).

When we make wrong choices, the door is opened in our lives for Satan to get into the situations and circumstances of our lives and mess things up! Simply put he moves in and causes situations to become worse thus instigating the breakup of families for instance! Often the breakups Satan is involved in are often rendered permanent and can *never* be fixed! Our choices let him in – we must remember that!

I’m sure you have heard people say, “This is my choice, and it isn’t going to affect anyone but me!” I must be blunt here – that is a lie directly from the mouth of Satan! All our individual choices affect us and those around us! They also affect those who love us and those we love! Adam and Eve’s choices affected the whole world past, present and future! Think about it!

**It was Adam and Eve’s choices** that literally turned control of the world over to Satan! “*We* ***know*** *that we are children of God, and that* ***the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”***  (I John 5:19) (NIV)

When Adam and Eve blew it, so many things went wrong after that. Everything that God had created as perfect was gone! Gone! They didn’t just blow it for us in the sense that now we have sin, but now we have pain and suffering! That isn’t all that has changed! They blew it in a lot more areas than that - they made a perfect world, imperfect! Plus, over time more and more of the world has been given over to Satan!

**IF** **Adam and Eve hadn’t been the ones who caused the fall –** **one of us would have!**

However, the point here is that the world the way it is now, the way we eat, the way we sleep, the way we exist, even someone’s sex life is not what it should be. It is not the way it was meant to be! Nothing is the way it was meant to be! Nothing, not even our relationship with God! In the Garden of Eden man was **free** to communicate with God! Yes, we still are free to communicate with God, but it is not the same! Nothing is going to be easy! But the best interpretation of the scripture which says*, “my yoke is easy”*, is that it will be **“easier”**! So, life on this earth is not going to be easy, but if you are walking in obedience, it will be **“easier”**. There is not one person who is walking in total obedience that has ever said every path they have completed for God has been easy. The world is not perfect, and we are not perfect, so how could it be easy? **Easier yes! But not easy!**

People are always saying: “God is in control just give it to Him and He will work it out! That is not the way it works! For us to sit around and think and say, “God is in control” and He will take care of it - is to **‘*expect*’ God to work and operate on a moment-to-moment divine intervention basis!**  **God doesn’t work like that!**

When a **faithful follower** has done everything, God has asked him/her to do in a situation according to God’s perspective, then and only then **may** it possibly be time for divine intervention! However, God must make that decision – **it is His call!**

God is **NOT** our servant; we are His servants. So, when a situation or circumstance occurs, we need to get with God and asked Him for His perspective and what if anything He would like us to do in regard to the situation. After we have done everything, He wants us to do, whether it takes one day or one year or even more – even after that we may still have to wait for a **very long time** for divine intervention because - **people have choices!**

You see God uses people on this earth to accomplish what He wants done! I Corinthians 3:9a states we are “co-workers” with God! And, Ephesians 6 says, *“Having done all stand.”* When we have done all and are in a “stand” position God may intervene! That is His choice!

When we come to God and tell Him that we want Him in our life – people more often than not think that everything is going to be really nice, because God is in complete control! We think God is going to take care of us and we are not going to have to deal with this stuff and that stuff. We get the impression from teachers, pastors, and so-called Christian books – that we don’t have to do anything God is going to handle it all!

If God is going to handle all our life and if God is in control of our lives that means He is handling every aspect of our life! So, if that is the case why did He give us our own free will? Why did He give us the “divine right” to make our own choices in our life? If God is in that level of control in each of our lives, why did He tell us that ‘the whole world is in the control of the evil one (Satan)?

In fact, it is taught in many churches that all we must do is go to church, read our Bible, pray, tithe and that is the limit of it because, God is going to take care of everything because He loves us.

In other words, we can go and make choices we know we shouldn’t and then when a huge problem arises, we say, “Oh, I’ll just give it to God, and He will take care of it!” Wrong! When I hear people profess this type of thinking this is what I’m hearing them say: If we mess up – God is going to clean it up! Sorry, **God is not our janitor!**

Allow me to interject something here: when we make choices for our lives that are not God’s choices for us that’s disobedience! When we make these choices there are always consequences! Most of the time the consequences from such mistakes are there in front of us for the rest of our lives! Why? Because. **God’s Grace doesn’t cancel out the consequences for sin!** God **does** forgive our sins. However, the consequences and damage are still present. Sometimes, the people we hurt forgive and many times they won’t! Keep in mind there are many choices we make that **can’t** be fixed because people have choices! Many choices we make on our own without going to God first - have tragic results!

A great many Christian people go around dependent on what they want to do and they are not dependent on God. **When they have a problem, they really deep down don’t want God to tell them what to do because He might tell them to do something they don’t want to do!**  So, they go about *figuring* it out for themselves and thus making the problem worse than it was!

When they finally realize nothing is working, they make the decision to go to God and confess the fact nothing is working! It is at this point they decide to put **the worse than before issue** at the foot of the cross-asking God to fix it!

The more people hear Dr. Feel-Good messages the more people are *prideful, full of themselves, and walking around in a false sense of security about God and who He is all the while falling on their faces!*

For anyone to think that they can just go around doing what they think is right and make these kinds of statements, I ask you, **who is the servant here?** Who are any of us to sit around and think we are going to be served by God? **We are here to serve Him! We are servants!**

**Now, is God a sovereign God? Yes!** In the scripture below God states He is the beginning and the end – the first and the last!

***“I am the ‘A’ and the ‘Z’, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”*** Revelation 22:13 (JNT)

However, the ***“in between”*** is the point of this teaching. Your ability to make your own choices is a *“divine right”* given to everyone on earth. This right is one not affected by Adam and Eve’s choices! Every choice we make has consequences whether good or bad. God gave every man and woman *their own free will.*

Your own free will is just that, it is your right to make your own choices during your lifetime; **of course, if that’s the way you want to handle it!** We are **not** puppets on a string!

People say, God is in control of my life! They even want to argue the point! God is not in control of everyone’s life unless they - **want Him to be**! If we don’t seek God in prayer and listen to what He wants us to do, we are going to make wrong choices! When we make up our mind to make a choice that is against God’s will - God will step back and allow you to go ahead with it! He has too! Why? Because He gave you your own free will to choose! He doesn’t go back on His Word!

Man has interpreted the God is in control issue like this: Everything is fine because God is going to be working for me on a moment-to-moment - intervention mode!

**If people think God is in control, what reason do they have to want to change? If God is already in control – that would mean everything is fine:**

If everything was fine, we wouldn’t have needed Jesus to come to this earth to set an example – because God would have already intervened and fixed it!

If everything was fine - we wouldn’t have needed Jesus to die on the cross and suffer in the manner that He did - because God would have been intervening to fix things as fast as He could since Adam and Eve had made their choices!

If everything was fine and if God was in control in the sense that people want to believe that He is – why is would the world be going down the toilet in the manner that it is? If that were true God would be having to work fast as He could fixing things through moment-to-moment intervening!

If everything was fine - why would there be a need for counselors, therapists, mental institutions, hospitals, etc. - because God would have already healed their emotions and the bodies of the people down through the ages through intervention!

**When the choices** in the Garden of Eden were made the damage was done and it could - ***NOT* *be fixed!*** Therefore, because of these choices the precious Son of God (Jesus) was asked by His Father to come to Earth and pay for our sins for us to be forgiven and have eternal life! Thank you, Jesus, for making that choice! Jesus came not only to die a horrific death – He came as a man to show us how to walk in this world full of sin, pain, and misery! He wanted to show us we could do it and show us how to do it!

**Moving on:** If God were in control in the manner people talk about in Christendom:

* He would have stopped Cain from killing his brother Abel!
* God would have stopped King David from committing adultery with Bathsheba and ordering her husband murdered! God was not in control of David’s life during the time David was making these choices!
* God would have stopped Moses from murdering the Egyptian; the people of Israel would not have been slaves; and God would have stopped Moses from abusing His power! Thus, allowing Moses **not** to enter the Promised Land!
* God would have stopped King Saul from disobeying His direction for battle in order that He wouldn’t have to remove Saul’s Anointing and take the Kingdom of Israel out of his hands!
* People say all the time God knew what was going to happen! Whether God did know there was a possibility Adam and Eve would do what they did; do you really think a God of truth and righteousness and a God of obedience, and a God of love and mercy really wanted Satan to have control of the world? Do you really think God wanted us to experience suffering, pain rejection and all the rest? Do you really think God wanted man/woman to have to die? Did God want His son to have to come to earth and suffer the most horrible horrific death possible simply because we couldn’t say **NO** to disobedience? Seriously, is that what God wanted to happen?

**God *only has* as much control of our lives as we allow Him to have!**

Everyone on this earth at some point has made a choice we knew was wrong and we did it anyway! God is not in control of a situation like that – we did **not** make the choice out of ignorance – we knew what we were doing was wrong – and that is rebellion! God was **not** in control!

Grave markers have the following information:

**Person’s Name**

**Date of Birth – Date of Death**

I’m sure you have heard it said: the dash is the most important. **That is truth!**  The dash represents the person’s lifetime after birth and before death. Men/women have no control over being born, and only God knows the length of our time on planet Earth! **However, our choices during our *in-between* determine who will be waiting for us at our DOD!**

All of us have control over each choice we make. Each choice we make has consequences because: “***A person reaps what he sows.”*** (Galatians 6:7c) Remember, whatever your choices during your ***in-between* God** **will not stop you!** Why? Because you’re right to make your own choices is a ***Divine Right*.**

God didn’t create us to be puppets! He wants us to want Him in our lives because we love Him and truly recognize the fact, we need Him! Whom you love is a choice! Whoever you serve is a choice! God wants you to make a choice to love and serve Him and spend eternity with Him! While on this earth God wants us to listen to His voice and choose to spend time with Him! He wants us to come to Him and get directions for our day! He wants us to talk with Him about what is going on in our life and seek His wisdom and direction! In doing this – we will be making the right choices! ***God only has as much control of your life – as YOU give Him!***

**Final Thought:** “It is in the middle that human choices are made: the beginning and the end remain with God. The decrees of God are the birth and death, and in between those limits man makes his own distress -or joy!”(Oswald Chambers)

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