

A Wise God Allows Suffering Part 2

I'm going to start this sermon off by looking at a sobering statistic of America's current behavior and I want you to tell me how well we're doing.

1. Violent Crimes up 995%.
2. The inmate population has grown from about 200,000 to about 2 million.
3. Unmarried couples living together up 725%.
4. Illegitimate births up 400%.
5. The divorce rate is now 60%.
6. A murder occurs every 23 minutes.
7. A rape occurs every 6 minutes.
8. An aggravated assault occurs every 48 seconds.
9. An abortion takes place every 20 seconds.
10. A burglary occurs every 8 seconds.
11. Sexually transmitted diseases (10-14 yr. olds) up 385%.
12. Unwed pregnancies (10-14 yr. Old) up 553%.
13. Teenage suicide up 200%.

14. Every day 13 youths commit suicide, 16 are murdered, 1,000 become mothers, 100,000 bring guns to school, 2,200 drop out of school, 500 begin using drugs, 1,000 begin drinking alcohol, 3,500 are assaulted, 630 are robbed, and 80 are raped.

15. More people have died in America in the last 30 years from murders and suicides than from all the wars in the history of the United States.

Now I don't know about you guys, but I'd say we'd better find some **answers quick** to our societal problems or our country is going to be in a heap of trouble, don't you think? And people, here's the irony of it all. We **already have** the answers to society's problems right in front of us. It's called the Bible.

But the problem we've been seeing is hardly anybody will even pick it up. And it's because of this self-imposed ignorance of God that comes from **not studying the Bible**, the lives of many Christians are now filled with just as many questions and just as much pain as the rest of the world. We are actually living in a time when many Churches are full of Christians who are living like **practical atheists**.

Oh, we say we believe in God, but half the time, by our **lips** and by our **lives**, we act like He's not there. And people, this not only keeps you from growing in your own walk with God, but it also keeps others from believing in God. Therefore, to avoid this irony of Christians living like practical atheists by not knowing **Who God Is**, we're going to continue in our study from the Word of God on the Character of God entitled, "**Who Is God?**"

And we've already seen the very **first thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Real**. The **second thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Personal**. And in the last two sermons we saw the **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise**. And there we saw that we know that **God Is Wise** because He **Knows the Beginning from the End** and He **is Above and Beyond Time**. And it's by knowing this that shows us that there's no such thing as accidents. Therefore since **God Is Wise** then

everything we go through must also be for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And there we saw that some of the wise reasons why God allows difficulties were **To Expose Our Sin Nature, To Keep Us From Becoming Spiritually Lazy, and To Cause Us To Be A Blessing To Others.**

But people that's not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **fourth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Learn That God is God and We Are Not.** But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Matthew 11:1-6 "After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee. When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

Now according to our text, John the Baptist was having a problem with the way things were turning out in his life. He just came off of a fruitful ministry in the desert preparing the way of the Lord, but now here he was in prison. John **assumed** that Jesus would usher in His Kingdom right then and there, but He didn't. And because life wasn't meeting up to John's expectations, he began to **doubt God's plan** and sent his disciples to check things out. And if we're honest with ourselves, we do the exact same thing

in our relationship with Jesus, don't we? Many times we **also assume** that we know what's best for us. We think we know better than God. But people, we don't have the ability to govern our own lives let alone the universe. Therefore, who do we think we are? Besides, God has a better way. It's called trust. And we can either trust that He knows what He's doing or we can give into doubt and start demanding that **life should go our way**. But folks, once we start demanding that life goes **our way**, guess what happens? We set ourselves up for some serious heartache.

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? He orchestrates a few difficulties to come our way and voila! We find out real fast that **we're not God** and we're not in control. And hopefully over time we start to realize that by cracky, maybe we don't know what's best for us after all. So is God being a big ol' meany? No, not at all. Rather He is teaching us a very valuable lesson in life. That **He** knows what's best for us, not ourselves. And so we can either doubt His love and care for us when life doesn't go **our way** and get **mad at God** or we can trust in His wisdom even when life doesn't make sense at all, like this lady found out.

“Years ago a fishing fleet went out from a small harbor on the East Coast of Newfoundland. In the afternoon there came up a great storm. When night settled down not a single vessel of all the fleet had found it's way into port.

All night long wives, mothers, children, and sweethearts paced up and down the beach, wringing their hands and calling on God to save their loved ones.

To add to the horror of the situation, one of the cottages caught fire. Since the men were all away, it was impossible to save the home. When the morning broke, to the joy of all, the entire fleet found safe harbor in the bay.

But there was one face, which was a picture of despair—the wife of the man whose home had been destroyed. Meeting her husband as he landed, she cried, ‘Oh husband, we are ruined! Our home and all it contained was destroyed by fire!’ But the man exclaimed, ‘Thank God for the fire! It was the light of our burning cottage that guided the whole fleet into port!’”

Now that lady found out that God was in full control all the time, didn’t she? When all was said and done, by cracker, God **really did** know what was best for everyone, didn’t He? And people this is the same choice that we all have in all our everyday trials. We can either doubt God and begin to question His goodness when our lives aren’t living up to our expectations, or we can trust God **no matter what happens** and sit back, relax and enjoy the ride of life even in the midst of the worst of storms. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to give up the reins of our life, trust God, and receive His peace. And isn’t that what we all pray for? Of course it is! And it’s all because **God Is Wise**.

Oh, but that’s not all. The **fifth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Make Us More Like Jesus**.

Ephesians 4:11-13 “The gifts he gave are these: some are to be apostles; some prophets; some evangelists; some pastors and teachers. These gifts are to make God’s people better able to do their work for him and to make the body of Christ become stronger. The gifts are given so that we will all

believe the one way and all know the Son of God. They are given so that we will be really grown-up Christians, like Christ himself.”

Now according to our text here, God didn't save you and I just so we could get our **fire insurance** and sit around on our blessed assurance doing nothing until we get to heaven. Hello! People, God also plans for us to become mature or in other words, to become a little more like Jesus **before** we get to heaven. And hopefully that's what we're all praying for, to be more like Jesus, right? But here's our problem. We make the mistake thinking that this process of becoming more like Christ **comes naturally** or that we have the ability to live just like Jesus on our own. But people, stop and think about this attitude. If you and I could live the Christian life on our own, then why would we need a Savior in the first place? This is nothing more than **spiritual pride**.

So out of mercy how does God rid us of this arrogance? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We find out real fast that we don't have a knack for living like our Savior. We have a knack for sinning! In fact, we also learn real fast that **the only way to be rid of our sinful behavior** is from the purifying hand of God, which sometimes comes in the form of difficulties. This is what Peter was saying.

1 Peter 1:6-7 “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined

by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

Now this “testing by fire” that Peter is talking about here is an illustration of a smelting furnace. A smelting furnace was a red-hot furnace for putting in raw gold after it was mined. And as the raw gold was melted down, the impurities would rise to the top and be skimmed off. And when the goldsmith **saw his reflection in the liquid** gold, he knew at that point that he had pure gold. And people, here’s the point. The gold wasn’t put into the furnace to **destroy it but to purify it**, to make it better. This is what Kenneth Wuest talks about concerning the Christian life and our difficulties.

“Christian suffering, whether it be in the form of persecution because of a Christlike life, or whether it comes to us in the form of trials, and testings which are the natural accompaniment of a Christlike life, such as illness, sorrow, or financial losses, is always used by a God of love to refine our lives. It burns out the dross, makes for humility, purifies and increases our faith, and enriches our lives.

And like the goldsmith of old, God keeps us in the smelting furnace until He can see the reflection of the face of the Lord Jesus in our lives. God is not so much interested in how much work we do for Him, as He is in how much we resemble His Son.”

Now people, is God being a big ol’ meany by allowing us to go through difficulties? No, not at all. As we’ve seen, He uses our everyday difficulties to get rid of the **crud in our hearts** and replace it with the image of Christ. Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to become a

little more like Jesus. And isn't that what we all pray for? Of course it is.

And it's all because **God Is Wise.**

Oh, but that's not all. The **sixth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Keep Us From Wasting Our Lives.**

1 Corinthians 10:31 "So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

Now according to our text, we're to glorify God with our lives **every single day in everything we do.** Why? Because this not only shows our love for Him but it also ensures that our lives **are not wasted.** How? Well, it works like this. When we glorify God we store up treasure in heaven. And since heaven lasts forever, so does our act of glorifying God. Therefore, our temporary lives here on earth become **eternally significant.** But, in case you haven't noticed there's somebody out there who doesn't want us to invest our lives for God but wants us to waste our lives for him. This being is none other than satan. And one of the many ways he tricks us into wasting our lives is by our **wicked world system.** People of God, we desperately have to wake up to the fact that this wicked world system is one of our biggest enemies. Does not our society **seduce us** to live only for ourselves and the things of this world? Does not our society **entice us** to indulge our every whim in all the glamour and glitz they have to offer? And people, the Bible gives a stiff warning to those who would live like this.

1 John 2:15 “Stop loving this evil world and all that it offers you, for when you love the world, you show that you do not have the love of the Father in you.”

So why does God give such a harsh warning? Because He knows that if we live only for this world then our lives will be **utterly wasted**. Why?

Because this world isn't going to last forever. In fact, it's going up in smoke!

2 Peter 3:10 “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.”

People, how stupid is it for someone to invest their **whole life** into something that one day is going to be burned to smithereens? Do you see the cunningness of the enemy?

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and **suddenly** the world starts to lose all its glamour and glitz. It's not so wonderful after all. And by cracky, we start to get steered towards that which is important in life. We start living for

heavenly things instead of earthly things. So is God being a big ol' meany?

No, not at all. Rather **He's protecting us from the enemy!** He's protecting us from wasting our lives by running after the things of this world.

Therefore, whether we like it or not or whether we want to admit it or not, our difficult circumstances are serving as an opportunity to ensure that when all is said and done **our lives have actually counted for something!** And

isn't that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it's all because **God Is Wise**.

But you might be asking, "Come on. Does knowing something as basic that **God is Wise** really make a difference in lives of people worldwide?" Well, you tell me if knowing there's a **purpose in all our pain** doesn't help.

"In the northeastern United States codfish are a big commercial business. But the public demand posed a problem to the shippers. At first they froze the cod, then shipped them elsewhere, but the freeze took away much of the flavor.

So, they experimented with shipping them alive, in tanks of seawater, but that proved even worse. Not only was it more expensive, the cod still lost its flavor and, in addition, became soft and mushy. The texture was seriously affected.

Finally, some creative person solved the problem in a most innovative manner. The codfish were placed in the tank of water along with their natural enemy—the catfish.

From the time the cod left the East Coast until it arrived at its westernmost destination, those ornery catfish chased the cod all over the tank. And, you guessed it, when the cod arrived at the market, they were as fresh as when they were first caught. There was no loss of flavor nor was the texture affected. If anything, it was better than before.

Each one of us is in a tank of particular and inescapable circumstances. It is painful enough to stay in the tank. But in addition to our situation, there are God-appointed 'catfish' to bring sufficient tension that keeps us alive, alert, fresh and growing.

It's all part of God's project to shape our character so we will be more like his Son. Understand why the catfish are in your tank. Understand they are part of God's method of producing character in your life and mine."

People of God, whether you believe it or not, it's precisely **because God loves** us that he allows those catfish to come into our lives. And what we've got to understand is that yes, our problems might be ornery, but **God's not!** Yes, He accepts us for who we are and where we are. But he loves us so much that He is not going to leave us there. God is more concerned about our character than our overall comfort. Therefore, **out of love**, God will use whatever He can, even difficulties, to help us grow deeper in our relationship with Him, which **really is** the solution, the answer to **all our problems** and societies problems as well. Therefore, yeah, I'd say knowing something as basic that **God is Wise** really does make a difference in people's lives, how about you?

And people this is the awesome message we get to tell to the nations, "God not only exists, but through Jesus Christ people **really can** have an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of the universe." But people, I'm telling you, if the world is ever going to believe our message, then we've got to stop acting like practical atheists. We've got to start demonstrating by our **lips** as well as our **lives** that God is not only **Real** and **Personal** but **God is Wise!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”
