

A Wise God Allows Suffering Part 5

“I was sitting at a stop light this morning. The lady in front of me was going through papers on the seat of her car, and when the light changed to green she did not obey its command – a green light is a commandment – NOT a suggestion.

When the light turned to red, and she still hadn't moved, I began, with my windows up, screaming strange words and beating on my steering wheel. My expressions of distress were interrupted by a policeman, gun drawn, tapping on my window.

Even though I protested by saying, ‘You can't arrest me for hollering in my car,’ he ordered me into the back seat of his. So after about two hours in a holding cell, the arresting officer advised me that I was free to go.

So I said, ‘I knew you couldn't arrest me for yelling in my own car. You haven't heard the last of this.’

And the officer replied, ‘I didn't arrest you for shouting in your car. You see, I was directly behind you at the light. I saw you screaming and beating your steering wheel, and I said to myself, ‘What a loser.’ But there is nothing I can do to him for throwing a fit in his own car.

But then I noticed the ‘Cross’ hanging from your rear view mirror, and the bright yellow ‘Choose Life’ license tag, and the ‘Jesus is Coming Soon’ bumper sticker, and the Fish symbol, and I thought for sure you must have stolen the car.’”

Now that guy wasn't being a very good witness for Jesus was he? No!

Oh, he had all the right **external signs** but his heart was internally wrong, wasn't it? And sooner or later it caught up with him, didn't it? But unfortunately, this kind behavior from so-called Christians is on the rise.

And do you know why? It's because so-called **Bible-believing Christians**

are refusing to study the Bible. And now because people are refusing to **study the Bible**, this is producing a generation of Churches that are full of Christians acting 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 this not only keeps us from growing in our 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?**"

We've already seen that 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 the last five sermons we saw the **third thing** we need to know about God is that **God Is Wise**. And there we saw since **God Is Wise** this means that everything we go through must serve for a wise purpose, even our difficulties. And in the last sermon we saw two more wise reasons why God allows difficulties and that was **To Produce a Powerful Testimony**, and **To Produce a Powerful Character**.

But people, that's not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **twelfth reason** why God allows difficulties to

occur is **To Get You Steered Into A New Direction**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Acts 16:6-10 "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, Come over to Macedonia and help us. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

Now according to our text, Paul and his companions had intentions of preaching the gospel to a certain area, but what happened? The Spirit of the Lord kept them from doing so. Why? Isn't that a good thing to do? Well, as Paul **found out later**, even though it may have been a good idea at the time, **it wasn't God's time**. So God steered Paul into the direction **He** wanted Paul to go.

And people, here's the kicker. Did you know that God also allows resistance to come our way so that **we too**, like Paul, get steered into the right direction? He really does. But herein lies our problem. We all say that we want to know and follow God's will, right? But when His plans don't line up to **our plans**, we start to rebel. But once we do that, we not only go down roads that are **harmful for us**, but we miss out on the fruitful ministry the Lord has designed for us **in the new direction**.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn real fast that we can either **follow our own plan** and experience nothing but pain, or we can submit to God's plan and **trust** that He indeed knows what's best for us. And people, isn't this the same choice that Paul had to make? And what was his response? Did Paul freak out? Did he cry and moan? Did he blame the devil or other people for the resistance he was experiencing? No! He knew that **God in His wisdom** was in full control and therefore God had a **wise reason** for changing the direction, like Wallace Johnson learned.

“Wallace Johnson, builder of numerous Holiday Inn motels and convalescent hospitals said, ‘When I was forty years old, I worked in a sawmill. One morning the boss told me, ‘You’re fired!’

I was depressed and discouraged and felt like the world caved in on me. It was during the depression and my wife and I greatly needed the small wages I had been earning.

So I went home and told my wife what happened and she said, ‘What are you going to do now?’ So I replied, ‘I’m going to mortgage our little home and go into the building business.’ My first venture was the construction of two small buildings. Within five years I was a multi-millionaire!’

Today, if I could locate the man who fired me, I would sincerely thank him for what he did. At the time it happened, I didn't understand why I was fired. Later though, I saw that it was God's unerring and wondrous plan to get me into the way of His choosing!”

So is God being a big ol' meany? No! He's trying to get us to see that **trouble is only opportunity in work clothes!** And sometimes God will

allow difficulties to get us steered into a **new and better direction** to receive a new and better opportunity! And when we resist God's leading, we're not only missing out on some grand opportunities, but we're headed down a destructive road. Why? Because when we resist God's plan for **our plan** then are we not in essence saying that we know what's best for us, **not God!** Uh huh. And that's one place you don't want to go. Why? Because it leads to a life of heartaches.

For instance, what if Wallace Johnson had insisted on getting his job back at the saw mill? Granted, he didn't understand it at the time, but when all was said and done, he was very thankful that that man had fired him, even to the point of wanting to shake his hand. And folks, even though you may not see it now, the difficulty you may be experiencing today, may very well turn out to be the **very best thing** that could've happened to you. Why? Because **God Is Wise!**

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 get us steered into a new direction to produce even more fruit for the glory of God. 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 **thirteenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Get You to Build Your Faith.**

1 Samuel 17:8,32-33,37 "Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, Choose a man and have him come down to me. David said to Saul, Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him. Saul replied, You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

Now according to our text here, **against all odds**, David was chomping at the bit to take down Goliath. And keep in mind here that at this point David was probably about twelve to fourteen years old. So how could such a young boy have such a great faith to take on such a huge warrior? Well, what did he say? This giant was no different than the lions and the bears he **already fought for many years**. Therefore, David had **built a strong faith over the years by having to face many difficulties over the years**.

But here's the kicker. Did you know that God also allows difficulties to come our way so that **we too** like David can have a strong faith? He really does. But herein lies our problem. We all want a strong faith, right? It's just that we don't want to **pay the price to get one**, do we? No! And so we never build the faith we need to face the Goliath's that come our way.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that we can either run and hide and blame others for all our problems or we can hit 'em head on and become stronger people **because of our problems**, like these boys learned.

“Researchers studied two young boys who were raised in the home of an alcoholic father. As young men, they each went their own way. Years later, one had turned out to be like his father, a hopeless alcoholic. But the other had turned out to be an upright citizen who never touched a drop of liquor.

So the first one was asked why he became an alcoholic and the second one was asked why he became a teetotaler. And oddly enough, they both gave the same identical answer in these words, ‘What do you expect when you had a father like mine?’”

So is God being a big ol' meany? No! He's teaching us a powerful lesson. That a David-like faith only comes by **battling your Goliaths**, not blaming others for your Goliaths! People of God, every one of us have troubles. And therefore, just like those two boys, we all have a choice to make. We can either groan about our problems or grow. We can either whine or we can shine. Or we can become bitter or we can become better. Shining and becoming better **is precisely what God intends for us** in all our trials. What makes the difference is hope! And hope only comes **when your faith is strong**. And your faith only gets strong by facing years of difficulties, like David did.

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 **our faith is built up high** to keep the Goliaths from dragging us down! 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 **fourteenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Get You to Appreciate Fellowship**.

Hebrews 10:23,25 "We must hold tightly to the hope that we say is ours. After all, we can trust the one who made the agreement with us. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer."

Now according to our text here, one of the biggest dangers we face as Christians is this: **the temptation to stop meeting together on a regular basis**. Why? Well, first of all, it has nothing to do with man-made legalism or dry stale religious ceremony. But it does have everything to do with our **spiritual well-being**. You see, if we don't meet together on a **regular basis**, we're going to miss out on a **regular source** of encouragement. And people, I don't know if you've realized this yet, but **we need to be encouraged**. Why? Because we live in a wicked and discouraging world. And it's only going to get more and more wicked **especially** as we see the Day of the Lord getting closer. Therefore, we need each other!

But herein lies our problem. We're tempted to not encourage ourselves in the things of the Lord. NO! But the **things of this world**. And once we spend less time with the Lord and more time with the world, **our zeal and passion for the Lord, will slowly start to die out**. It happens every time.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn real fast to appreciate the love and encouraging support of fellow Christians. Why? **Because it sure ain't coming from the world**. And then hopefully our eyes are opened to the danger of living a life of isolation, like this guy learned.

"A member of a certain Church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the Pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening and the Pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his Pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace, and waited.

The Pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the Pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it on one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and 'dead as a doornail.' Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. But just before the Pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire.

Immediately it began to glow once more with light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the Pastor reached the door to leave, his host

said, ‘Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I’ll be back at the Church service next Sunday.’”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? Is He trying to torture us by having to go to Church services? No! He’s trying to protect us from a spiritual danger. He knows if we isolate ourselves or get distracted by the things of this world, our zeal for Him **and the lost** will start to die out! And if He has to allow a few difficulties to come our way to get us to appreciate the need for fellowship, **which is for our own benefit**, then so be it!

People, this is no time to be playing games with God. If we stop meeting together as some are in the habit of doing then not only is **our spiritual growth in jeopardy** but so are the **spiritual destinies** of those around us. People of God, our society is going to hell in a Ferrari and if we really want to make a difference **while we can** then we better get serious in our walk with God. **Especially** since we see the Day of the Lord approaching! And if we really love the Lord and want our loved ones to be saved then we’re not going to spend all of our time in the things of this world. No! We’re going to meet together and work together to **get the gospel out to this world!** Amen?

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 help us to **encourage one another** in our own walk with God, **and** to work together

sharing the gospel so others might be saved. 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 that **God is so Wise** that He **never makes a mistake**, doesn't minister to your heart, like this lady discovered.

"A certain missionary found herself seriously ill where the Lord had stationed her. And to add to her sorrow, her check had not arrived and she was forced day after day to do without the good food she needed and instead had to live on a miserable diet of oatmeal and canned milk.

But in spite of everything, the lady missionary got better, and after 30 days of a steady oatmeal diet, she finally got her check and was able to get something different on the table. But during her illness, she thought the Lord was not doing her right.

So she finally got to go home on furlough and she of course told of her great trial to an eager audience. However, at the close of the meeting, a doctor inquired as to the nature of her ailment.

And upon hearing what the digestive malfunction was, he said this, "Well, if you're check had arrived, you would not be here talking to me today, you'd be dead. You see, the diet we prescribe for that particular fatal illness is a 30-day oatmeal diet."

People of God, if it seems like God's been giving you nothing but a yucky bowl of oatmeal in life lately, day after day after day, then don't think God's not doing you right. Give it some time and you're going to see that that bowl full of difficulties was one of the best things He could've ever

given to you. Why? Because **God is so Wise** He **never ever makes a mistake**, and that includes our difficulties. 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."
