

A Wise God Allows Suffering Part 6

“A Police officer pulls over a speeding car and the officer says, ‘I clocked you at 80 mph. sir.’

And the driver says, ‘Gee, officer, I had it on cruise control at 60, perhaps your radar needs calibrating.’

And not looking up from her knitting the man’s wife says sweetly, ‘Now don’t be silly dear, you know that this car doesn’t have cruise control.’

So as the officer writes out the ticket, the driver looks over at his wife and growls, ‘Can’t you keep your mouth shut for once?’

But the wife just smiles and says, ‘You should be thankful your radar detector went off when it did.’

So now the officer writes out a second ticket for the illegal radar detector and the man glares at his wife and says through clenched teeth, ‘Come on, woman, can’t you keep your mouth shut!’

So the officer frowns and says, ‘And I notice that you’re not wearing your seatbelt, sir. That’s an automatic \$75 fine.’

But the driver says, ‘Yeah, well you see officer, I had it on, but took it off when you pulled me over so I could get my license out of my back pocket.’

And the wife says, ‘Now dear you know very well you didn’t have your seat belt on. You never wear your seat belt when you’re driving.’

So as the police officer is writing out the third ticket the driver turns to his wife and barks, ‘WHY DON’T YOU JUST BE QUIET?’

And the officer looks over at the woman and asks, ‘Ma’am, does your husband always talk to you this way?’

And the wife sweetly replies, ‘Oh heavens no, officer, only when he’s been drinking.’”

Now that man's lying finally caught up with him, didn't it? His wife made sure of that. And his behavior was straining their marriage, wasn't it? But people, did you know that lying isn't the only behavior harmful to relationships? So is a **lack of Bible study**. And it not only affects your marital relationship, but it affects your relationship with God. How? Well, because people are refusing to **study the Bible**, it's produced 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 six 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 three more wise reasons why God allows difficulties and that was **To Get Us Steered**

Into A New Direction, To Get Us To Build Our Faith, and To Get Us To Appreciate Fellowship.

But people, that's not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **fifteenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Teach You the Power of Praise**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Hebrews 13:15-16 "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Now according to our text, the writer of Hebrews instructs on some practical ways in which we can please God. **One**, we can do good things, **two**, we can share things, and **three** we can **continually** offer up to God a sacrifice of praise. But notice the **two things** about this kind of praise that pleases God. One is it's **continual** and two it's a **sacrifice**.

But herein lies our problem. You see, we love to praise God when things are looking up but we don't want to praise Him when things are looking down, do we? No! I mean, to praise God when things are looking creepy, **why that would be a sacrifice**. Uh huh. And that's precisely the point. You see, God makes it very simple for us. There are only two times we should praise the Lord. When you're alone, and when you're with

somebody. But since we don't want to do this, we miss out on the **power of praise**.

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 **pout because of our pain** or offer up a sacrifice of praise **in spite of our pain**. And people, once you learn to praise God **at all times**, not just in the **good times**, you just discovered the **power** to overcome your pain in the **bad times!**

Psalm 42:5 "Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."

People, the power to make it through disturbing circumstances and even a deep dark depression comes not by getting rid of your problems. No! Sometimes you can't. It comes when you praise God **in spite of your problems!** Let me show you what I mean.

For instance, one time I was seriously down in the dumps. I mean I had the **spirit of Hee Haw** all over me. You know, gloom, despair, and agony on thee. How many of you've been there? So here I was, severely depressed for two days. It was like a big, heavy, dark cloud moved in over the top of me. You may say, "Whip dee doo dah, so what." But for my personality, it is not normal. I am usually pretty goofy and chocked full of

corny humor on a consistent basis. It's only if I'm sick that I "wind down." And for some reason, my wife enjoys those times. Go figure! Therefore, I knew something was up when the **depression persisted**.

So on the second day I was taking a shower and I think I was even getting depressed about being depressed all that time. Then the thought came to me, "Can't you still praise the Lord?" **Now even the very thought** of praising God at that moment really was a sacrifice because I sure didn't **like** what I was experiencing and I didn't **feel like** praising God. But I had nothing to lose. So, I started singing to the Lord out of sheer determination, no enthusiasm. And it was all I could do to just spit out the first verse of a song. In fact, the whole first song was very mechanical. But as I moved into the second song, something began to change. My **spirit** began to lift. My **attitude** began to change. And by the third song, I was praising God at the top of my lungs! And I'm sure the people below our apartment loved it too!

But here's the point. It was the **sacrifice of praise** that **returned my focus on the Lord**. And once I became focused on Father instead of my feelings, I was able to transcend the situation. The dark cloud was gone! Why? **Because I was experiencing the power of praise**. People, it's impossible to avoid problems or pain in this life. And fortunately God doesn't leave us hanging high and dry. He shows us the way to make it

through our problems is by praising Him, in spite of our problems! And people, this power of praise not only works with a momentary depression, but even with a mournful death, like Horatio Spafford learned.

“Horatio Spafford and his family were members of the Fullerton Avenue Presbyterian Church. And Spafford and his wife had learned what it meant to completely trust God in every situation.

First, The Spaffords’ only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. And a year later, Horatio had invested heavily in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan but every one of these holdings was wiped out by the great Chicago Fire.

So aware of the toll that these disasters had taken on his family, Horatio decided to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England and then travel throughout Europe.

Yet just before they set sail, a last-minute business issue forced Horatio to delay. So not wanting to ruin the family holiday, he told his family to go on ahead as planned. He’d catch up to them on the other side of the Atlantic.

However, their ship, never made it. It collided with an English sailing ship, and sank within twenty minutes. And even though Horatio’s wife, Anna, was able to cling to a piece of floating wreckage, all four of their daughters were killed. And the next thing you know, Horatio received the horrible telegram from his wife, only two words long, ‘saved alone.’

So Spafford immediately boarded the next available ship to be near his grieving wife. And during the voyage, the captain of the ship had called him and said, ‘I believe we are now passing the place where the ship was wrecked.’ So Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn of praise to God in the midst of his pain. Maybe you recognize it

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come, Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul. It is well, it is well with my soul."

So is God being a big ol' meany? No! He's trying to teach us a powerful lesson. That **true praise** doesn't depend on our feelings, **but in spite of our feeling!** True praise is not centered on ourselves, but on our Savior. And Horatio's hymn brings us back to the bottom line, that at the end of the day, come hell or high-water, it is our relationship with God that holds us fast in all our trials, **nothing else!**

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 show us the **uplifting power of praise** so the problems of life won't drag 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 **sixteenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Take You To Heaven.**

Romans 2:4-5 "Don't you realize how kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Or don't you care? Can't you see how kind he has been in giving you time to turn from your sin? But no, you won't listen. So you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin."

Now according to our text here, God obviously wants all of us to be saved and He demonstrates this by showering us with His kindness,

tolerance, and patience, right? But folks, if we're honest with ourselves, we usually don't respond to God's call to heaven by His acts of kindness, do we? No! Are you kidding! Why, when things are going great, **we don't need God!** But folks, the reality is that if we refuse to turn from our sin and get saved, we're not on the highway to heaven. No! **We're on the highway to hell.** And I'd say that's kind of a big problem, how about you?

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 rebel against God because of our difficulties and stubbornly go to hell, or we can repent and receive His grace and go to heaven. Which one would you rather have? And so people, hello, if it takes a few difficulties to open our eyes to our **spiritual need**, then so be it! It's precisely **because God loves us** that He'll do whatever it takes to take us to heaven. And believe it or not, this **loving gesture** of God of allowing difficulties to get us saved is a much more common scenario than you might think.

For instance, this is what it took for the **mighty Apostle Paul**. If you recall, Paul was stubbornly on the road to Damascus getting ready to imprison and maybe even kill some more Christians. So what did God do? He knocked Paul off his high horse and struck him with blindness. Why? Was He being a big ol' meany and was trying to torture Paul? No! When all

was said and done, Paul got saved. And now he was no longer on the highway to hell, he was on the highway to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for the mighty Apostle Paul to get saved, it worked for **my Dad**. Over the years my Dad stubbornly refused to see His need of Christ. So it took the death of my Dad's sister before his eyes were opened. And in his moment of grief and despair, the Pastor who was visiting prayed that God would touch my dad with His love. And my Dad said that **right when the Pastor finished praying** that it was like a lightning bolt went from the top of his head all the way through his body and he felt a wonderful sense of God's peace and he knew from that point on that God was real. So was God trying to torture my Dad by allowing the death of his sister? No! When all was said and done, my Dad got saved. And now he's not on the highway to hell, he's on the high way to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for my Dad, it worked for **my Uncle**. He didn't see a need for God. He was perfectly fine without Him. So over several years it took the death of his **4-year** old daughter, his **21-year** old son, and his wife before his eyes were opened. So was God trying to torture my uncle by allowing the death of his loved ones? No! When all was said and done, my Uncle got saved. And now he's not on the highway to hell, he's on the high way to heaven.

Oh, but this not only worked for my Uncle, it worked for **me**. I didn't need God. I was my own god. Besides, Christians were a bunch of idiots who needed a book to tell them what to do. Not me! So over the years it took getting strung out on **demonic drugs**, getting involved in **demonic teachings**, and nearly going out of my mind by **demonic attacks** before my eyes were opened. So was God trying to torture me by allowing me to go on the verge of insanity? No! When all was said and done, I got saved. And now I'm not on the highway to hell, I'm on the high way to heaven.

But people, my family and I aren't the only ones who **spiritually** benefited from a life of difficulties. So did this man.

“Adoniram Judson was the son of a minister, in Malden, Massachusetts. And early on in life he showed that he was a brilliant child. When he was 12 years old he was teaching the Adult Sunday School class the Book of Revelation from the original Greek. But his intelligence got the best of him and he decided he was smarter than God and didn't need Christianity.

And soon he was terrorizing his Christian college classmates at the age of 16 with his anti-Christian debates. And at college, Judson had a roommate by the name of Jacob Eames. When Eames entered college he did so professing to be a Christian but by the time he graduated college he professed being an atheist and he gave the credit to Adoniram Judson.

Well, Judson kept his atheistic beliefs concealed from his parents until his 20th birthday, when he broke their hearts with his announcement that he had no faith and that he intended to go to New York and learn to write for the theater.

But this life of a playwright didn't prove to be the life of his dreams. So one night he found himself staying in a small village inn that he'd never been in before. And the innkeeper apologized to Judson because he only had one

room left and warned him that his sleep might be interrupted because there was a man critically ill in the next room.

But Judson was tired and said it didn't matter to him. And throughout the night Judson heard comings and goings and low voices and groans and gasps from the man in the next room. And periodically the man shouting horrible profanities as he cried out for help.

And it bothered Judson to think that the man next to him may not be prepared to die. And this of course made him wonder about himself and he started to have terrible thoughts of his own dying. But he felt foolish because atheists weren't supposed to have these kind of struggles.

So the next morning as Judson was leaving he asked if the man next door was better. And the innkeepers said, 'He's dead.' So Judson, shocked, asked, 'Do you know who he was?' And the innkeeper replied, 'Oh yes. His name was Eames, Jacob Eames.'

Judson could hardly move as he pondered the horrible death of his atheist friend whom he himself had turned away from Christ. Judson knew that this was not a meaningless event. That hell should open up in that country inn and snatch Jacob Eames, from the next bed and not him, could not be by chance.

So Judson left the inn, hopped on his horse and rode hard down the dusty trail with tears streaming down his face and the words pounding over and over again in his mind, 'Death, hell, death, hell, death, hell.'

Soon, his heart was broken and convicted, and Judson hopped off his horse, dropped on his knees and there in the dust, he gave his heart to Jesus Christ."

So is God being a big ol' meany? No! He's actually being very merciful to us! You see, in your difficulties, God may not be so much trying to scare you into heaven as **He's trying to scare the hell out of you!**

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 open our

eyes and soften our hearts so **God can take us to heaven!** And isn't that what we all pray for? Of course it is. And it's all because **God Is Wise.**

Oh, but people, it gets even better. Not only will God use our difficulties to get us saved, but after we're saved, He'll keep the difficulties coming so that others might get saved too. Now let's read the rest of the story.

“After being saved, Adoniram Judson became a missionary to Burma. But he and his first wife soon discovered that there was no glamour in the life of a missionary.

They were barraged with constant struggles, sicknesses, and interruptions. They endured a life-long battle in the 108 degree heat with cholera, malaria, dysentery, and unknown miseries that would take 2 of Judson's wives, 7 of his children, and colleague after colleague in death. He never saw his father or Mother or brother again and didn't return for 33 years.

But during this time Judson translated the Bible into the Burmese language. And little did he know just how mightily God was going to use his translation. You see, Judson was coming back on a ship to the states to be treated for an illness, but he died en route and so he never got to see to totality of the fruits of his labor.

You see, it just so happened, unbeknownst to Judson, that there was an old, old Burmese legend that said one day a man was going to come with a book which was going to have the truth in it and it just so happened that Judson spent years and years of suffering to translate that book called the Bible.

And as a result, the Burmese people began to come to Christ in mass. Within 25 years there were 11,878 baptized believers and today there are close to 3,700 congregations of Baptists who trace their origin to this one man's labors of love. Why?

Because God cared enough to let a man suffer, so that he not only could be saved, but so that 1,000's of others could be saved as well.”

People of God, it is **precisely because God is Wise AND because He loves us** that He allows many difficulties to come our way. Why? You see, He not only loves you and wants to take you to heaven, but He wants **to use you** to take others to heaven as well! And if difficulties make this possible, then so be it!

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.”
