

A Wise God Allows Suffering Part 4

“A man passed away and went to heaven and upon arriving at the Pearly Gates, St. Peter said, ‘Come on in. I’ll show you around. You’ll like it here.’

So the man walked through the gates, and the first thing noticed was clocks. Clocks everywhere! There were grandfather clocks, wall clocks, watches and clocks in every corner, each ticking away at different rates and each of them having a name engraved on them.

So the man asked St. Peter what the deal was. St. Peter replied, ‘The clocks keep track of things on Earth. There is one clock for each person. Every time a person on earth sins, the hands on the clock made a complete revolution.

And upon closer examination the man began to recognize a few names. So he decided to look for a particular friend of his but after searching he simply could not find it.

So the man asked St. Peter for the location of his friend’s clock. And St. Peter replied, ‘Oh, his clock! Well, we moved his into the office and are using it for a fan.’”

Yes, when we get to heaven, we’re going to see a whole different side of things that took place on earth, aren’t we? But I think one of the biggest things our eyes are going to be opened to is not merely the amount of sins we committed. Nope. It’s this. The amount of **unnecessary pain** we caused ourselves by not studying 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 four times 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 Make Us More Humble, To Make Us More Joyful, and To Make Us More Loving**.

But people, that's not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **tenth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Produce A Powerful Testimony**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

Genesis 50:15-21 "When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him? So they sent word to Joseph, saying, Your father left these instructions before he died: This is what you are to say to Joseph: I

ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly. Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.

When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. We are your slaves, they said. But Joseph said to them, Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them."

Now according to our text, after having his brothers try to kill him and over many many years of suffering, Joseph learned one of the most powerful lessons in life. And that is this. God will use **even the pain other people cause us**, and turn it around for our highest good. And when all was said and done, Joseph testified to this truth and thus his words became a **powerful testimony**, even to this day, right? I mean, how many of us have benefited from reading this passage of Scripture? It's very encouraging, isn't it?

But people, here's the kicker. Did you know that God allows painful circumstances so that **we too** can testify to the Lord's goodness? He really does. But herein lies our problem. We love to hear about **other people's testimonies** but we don't want to become one ourselves, do we? No! And so we miss out on being a powerful source of encouragement to others.

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 and throw a big pity party or we can **be patient** and wait for God to produce a powerful testimony. People, whether you like it or not or whether you believe it or not, **going through rough times** are some of the best things that could ever happen to us. Why? Because that's where a powerful testimony comes in!

And since we have a hard time believing this, I'm going to share a few testimonies from this life. For instance, when I first got saved, after I paid all the bills, I only had \$80 dollars a month to live on. That included gas, clothing, entertainment, emergencies, and food. Consequently, I didn't have money for food. But for three months in a row, I never once had to go to the store and I never went hungry. It was the strangest thing. I **never** asked for food but I had people out of the blue giving me food, inviting me over for supper or taking me out to eat. It was totally cool. In fact, I wish they would have kept doing it. And until I could get on my feet, **God still provided for me** against all odds. And I don't know about you, but I'd say that is a powerful testimony for those who are concerned about their **provisions**, how about you?

Oh, but that's not the only testimony. One time I had a car whose driver's side window would never work right. If you rolled it down, it wasn't going back up. You had to disassemble the whole door to get it back up. It

was a pain in the neck so I always left it up, even in the summer. Then one night at Bible College, the car got stolen. For almost three weeks I heard nothing from the police and people were saying it was gone, totally stripped, write it off. But twenty days later I was told the news, the car was found. And apparently, the person who stole the car **had rolled down the window** and since it wouldn't go back up, they just ditched it at an apartment complex. And when all was said and done, there was not a scratch on the car, I ended up with a better stereo, and I gained about two hundred dollars. Now, I don't know about you but I'd say that's a powerful testimony for those who have experienced a **sudden calamity**, how about you?

Oh, but that's not all. One time, overnight, my wife Brandie and I found ourselves in a financial pitfall of \$4,000 dollars. And for some people, that may not sound like a big deal, but to us at that time, you might as well said four million dollars. But lo and behold, out of the blue, God provided not only \$4,000 dollars but \$5,000 dollars. Not a loan either. But a gift. And the person specifically requested to never be paid back. And they weren't even a Christian! Now I don't know about you but I'd say that's a powerful witness to those who are concerned about their **finances**, how about you?

Oh, but the testimonies continue! One time Brandie and I were at a 50th year celebration for a company I worked for. And when it was all over,

we agreed to meet that next morning with my other fellow employees in the lobby. But when we got there, we **waited and waited** until it dawned on us **after wasting precious time** that they ditched us. So now we're all alone in Chicago not knowing where we are and trying to make a mad dash to the airport because the plane was leaving very shortly. Well, we finally made it to the airport by the skin of our teeth and when we get there we discover that they had Brandie and I sitting apart in different rows. But since **it was no longer a great desire** to sit with my fellow employees, we told the people to put us anywhere on the plane, just make sure we're sitting together.

So we sat way in the back and **it just so happened** that across the aisle from me was a guy reading Hebrew. I thought either this guy's Jewish or a Christian. As it turned out, he was Dr. Desmond Ford from Auburn, California and we proceeded to talk about the Lord for the next couple of hours. And during our conversation, he repeatedly challenged me to go back to school and finish my graduate studies.

Well, that rolled around in my head for a while and about **three months later** I resigned from the Pastorate I was in, in Sacramento and took a sabbatical for a little over a year to complete my graduate studies. And **it just so happened** that right after completing my graduate studies the opportunity came to take on another Pastorate in Northern California in

which I did and then **totally unplanned** by us, led to the development of an Internet media teaching ministry. Well, as it turned out, this all led to the formation of a **global** teaching ministry called Get A Life! International which now reaches 100's of countries all over the world 24/7 in which God is using to bless and or save people all over the world!

But then out of the blue, God put it on our hearts to go back into a local Pastorate and then **it just so happens** that one day I get an email from this lady called **Mary Bugay** saying her Church wanted to talk to me. And when all was said and done I ended up being called to Pastor that Church, maybe you've heard of it, it's called Niagara Frontier Bible Church, but the strange thing is it just so happens to be located right next to the **one guy** who used to witness to me back on the West Coast **now lives** and the first sermon I preached here, was the first time I got to see him **since before** I even got saved. And now other people are getting saved and the Church is growing strong! **Why?** All because we were ditched at an airport. Now, I don't know about you, but I'd say that's a powerful witness for those wondering why God is **leading them in the direction He is**, how about you?

So is God being a big ol' meany? No! He's showing us a powerful truth in life. **That every pearl begins as a pain in the oyster's stomach!** And therefore, even if you can't see it now, be rest assured of this fact. As a

child of God, the pain you may be experiencing today, **really is** going to turn out to be a priceless treasure in the form of a powerful testimony. **You can bank on it!** 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 create a powerful testimony that becomes a **powerful source of encouragement** to those around us. 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 **eleventh reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Produce a Powerful Character**.

Romans 5:1-4 "By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now, because of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live at peace with God. Christ has also introduced us to God's undeserved kindness on which we take our stand. So we are happy, as we look forward to sharing in the glory of God. But that's not all! We gladly suffer, because we know that suffering helps us to endure. And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope."

Now according to our text here, one of the biggest things that should be a source of joy to us in life is what? **Suffering**, right? And no, Paul was not on drugs here when he wrote this, folks. No! He knew that our difficulties help us to learn endurance and endurance is what is needed to **build our character**. But wait a second, that's not what society says is it? And people this is precisely the problem. We live in a world today that sees **no value** in our difficulties. In fact, we're told to avoid pain at all costs and instead **pamper yourself**. And now the average person's goal in life today is

to tip toe through life with as much cushion as possible just so they can arrive at death safely! But people, what did we read? **We need difficulties.** Why? Because they shape us into a people of character. And a person full of character has the necessary strength to make it through a world **full of suffering.**

People of God, it's a lie to say you can tip toe through life with no pain at all. Hello! We live in a fallen sinful world. Therefore, sooner or later, you're going to experience some pain. And when people buy into this lie to do nothing but pamper yourself, it only sets them up for a life of needless heartaches!

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We learn that pouting will get us nowhere fast and hopefully, **over time**, we begin to appreciate the **value of our difficulties.** And since we have a hard time believing this, I want to share some proof.

For instance, both of my grandmothers are women of character. Why? Because they had a pampered life. Are you kidding! No way! They had a **painful life.** For instance, one grandmother lived ten miles from town and had to give birth **by herself** to one of her kids. And afterwards, she cleaned up the baby, and proceeded to get the food ready for the men when they

came in from the fields. Another time, during the depression, her family lost it all and had to live in a cook shack. You know, the old chuck wagon that they used to haul food out to the men in the fields during harvest time? **That was their house.** And so I asked her how long they lived in it and she said, “Oh, until the tornado blew it away!” In fact, twice in her life, her house burnt down and they we’re left with nothing but the shirts on their backs.

Twice!

And then my other grandma’s **daily routine** during some rough times back in the Midwest, was to milk the cow with one hand and with the other she’d pick up rocks and bean rabbits in the head for food that night!

Oh, but that’s not all! I also greatly admire my Dad. Why? Because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth? NO! **He was born with a shovel in his hand!** My dad at the **age of seven** went to work. And not just any old work, mind you. It was heavy construction, pouring concrete. My grandfather had my dad work after school, on every weekend, and every summer. Holidays were just another workday. Later, when he married my mom, they moved to Kansas to farm. They had no running water and had to pump it manually out of a well to do all the cooking and washing. When I grew up I asked my Dad why they moved back to California when I was still a baby. And he said it was because they got tired of “starving to death.” **And**

he wasn't joking! Apparently they had two bad winters in a row and were totally wiped out financially. They had no money and nobody would give them credit. So the last winter in Kansas, my Dad fed our family with rabbits and milo. And then to make things worse, halfway into the winter he ran out of bullets so he had to use box traps to keep the rabbit meat coming.

Now I don't know about you but I don't think the average person today could survive a week under those conditions. Why? Because we're being pampered to death and it's **killing our character!** People the reason why I admire so many people in my family is because they have a **strong character**. And the reason why they have a strong character **today** is because they had **ton of troubles yesterday**. But people, my family isn't the only one who benefited from a life of difficulties. So was this man.

“When he was seven years old, his family was forced out of their home on a legal technicality, and he had to work to help support them. At age nine, his mother died. At twenty-two, he lost his job as a store clerk. He wanted to go to law school, but his education wasn't good enough.

At twenty-three, he went into debt to become a partner in a small store. At twenty-six his business partner died, leaving him a huge debt that took years to repay. At twenty-eight, after courting a girl for four years, he asked her to marry him. She said no. At thirty-seven, on his third try, he was elected to Congress, but two years later, he failed to be reelected.

At forty-one, his four-year-old son died. At forty-five, he ran for the Senate and lost. At forty-seven, he failed as the vice-presidential candidate. At forty-nine, he ran for the Senate again and lost.

At fifty-one, he was elected President of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln, a man many consider the greatest leader the country ever had. Some people get all the breaks.”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s teaching us a powerful lesson. He’s trying to get us to see that a pampered life leads to a lazy life. And a lazy life leads to weak life. Why? **Because you never had to build character.** Where have the great leaders-of-old like Abraham Lincoln gone? Where are the Patrick Henrys who cry out “Give me liberty or give me death!” Instead we have a pampered society who cries out, “**Give me hot french fries or I’ll tell the manager!**” People, what America really needs is more shortages. Americans have always been great at handling adversity. Prosperity is what’s been doing us in. **We’re turning into people with no character.**

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 we learn to **endure** and start producing a **powerful character**. And people, when we develop a powerful **character**, whether we realize it or not, we gain the power needed to soar above any and all problems in life, **no matter what comes our way**. 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 every time that God takes away something **it’s always because** there’s a **wise reason** behind it, helps things out. Like this story reveals.

“A medieval man of God went on a journey one day and he took along with him all that he owned, a scroll, a candle, and a rooster. The scroll he read and loved, the candle provided him light, and the rooster crowed to wake him up in the morning.

One evening, he arrived in a small town. He asked for hospitality from home after home but was rudely refused both food and lodging. But the believing man didn’t let this get him down for he was fond of saying, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’

Later that day, the wind began to pick up and the man sought protection from the harsh wind by hiding in a clump of high bushes. And there he tied up his rooster nearby and with praise in his heart, he began to read his scroll.

But a sudden gust of wind blew out his light and the man found himself without the means to relight his candle. But the trusting man simply replied, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’

So the man prepared to go to sleep but suddenly a fox charged out of the darkness and snapped away the man’s rooster. But the man said, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’

So the man laid down and went to sleep. In the morning, when he awoke, he gathered his scroll to his heart and walked back to the unfriendly village. To his horror he saw that robbers had come in the night. The village had been plundered and burned and the villagers had all been murdered.

And suddenly it dawned on the man of God. If he would have been granted hospitality, he too would have died. And if his light had shone or his rooster had crowed, the robbers would have been led right to him.

So the godly man declared, ‘God in his mercy and wisdom does all things well.’ And in the light of day, he read his scroll and praised God.”

People of God, if the Lord is leading you down a path you currently don’t understand, or if He has taken away some things in your life that has left you bewildered, then be rest assured that when all is said and done, you’ll discover that it was one of the best things he could have ever done to you. Why? **Because “God in his mercy and wisdom does all things 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.”
