

A Wise God Allows Suffering Part 3

You know, as we continue to study God's wisdom, I think there's one **wise lesson** we all need to learn and that is this. None of us are born with perfect knowledge like God. How many of you can figure that out without any help? Therefore, sooner or later all of us are going to run into some things in life that are pretty hard to understand, right? But just to make sure we're all on the same page and since I had lots of time to let my brain wander, I'm going to share with you a few of the things I personally find hard to understand.

1. Why can't women put on mascara with their mouths closed?
2. Why do people who spend all their money on beer, cigarettes, and lottery tickets always complain about being broke and not feeling well?
3. If a man saw a woman wearing a sweatshirt with 'Guess' on it and he said, 'Thyroid problem?' would he be stupid or insane?
4. If a pig loses its voice is it disgruntled?
5. Do jellyfish get gas from eating jellybeans?
6. Do you think that when they asked George Washington for ID that he just whipped out a quarter?
7. If swimming is good for your shape, then why do the whales look the way they do?
8. If you choke a smurf, what color does it turn?

9. If the professor on Gilligan's Island can make a radio out of a coconut, then why can't he fix a stupid hole in a boat?

10. If women can have PMS, then can't men have ESPN?

Yes, as you can see there are lots of things in life that are hard to understand aren't there? But you know, I think one of the biggest things I have a hard time understanding has got to be this. Why is it that people, **even Christians** are willing to spend **countless hours** and **tons of cash** in a frantic search for answers to all their problems when the whole time the answers are right in front of them in the Bible! And because people refuse to **study the Bible**, this has 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 three 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 some of those wise reasons why God allows difficulties were **To Expose Our Sin Nature, To Keep Us From Becoming Spiritually Lazy, To Cause Us To Be A Blessing To Others, To Teach Us That God Is God And We Are Not, To Make Us More Like Jesus, and To Keep Us From Wasting Our Lives.**

But people that's not the only wise reasons why God allows difficulties to occur. The **seventh reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Make Us More Humble**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9 "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

Now according to our text, God not only **permitted** Paul to have a few difficulties in his life but He **purposely allowed** Paul to be tormented by an actual demon. Why? To keep Paul from becoming conceited or in other words prideful. Why? Because if Paul became arrogant it would ruin the work God was going to do through him. Therefore, **out of love**, God kept

Paul humble **for his own benefit**. How? Through a serious difficulty, **even a demonic one**.

But here's the kicker. Did you know that God also allows difficulties to humble you and I today? He really does. And people, whether you like it or not or whether you believe it or not, **being humbled** is one of the best things that could ever happen to us. Why? Because that's when we receive God's grace. And people, that's why Paul could rejoice through all his pain because he saw the higher purpose through it all. He knew it was the grace of God that gives us **the power of God**. And how many of us want to be a more powerful Christian? But herein lies our problem. **We don't like being humbled do we?** No! We scream at the very thought of being humbled.

So out of mercy do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! Our pride and self-love goes right out the window and humility starts coming in like a flood! Why? Because folks, how do we react to difficulties most of the time? **Not very loving, do we?** No! Therefore, we're humbled **by having to see ourselves for who we really are**. Jeanne Guyon makes this amazing observation.

“Always guard yourself from being anxious because of your faults. Most of the time your distress really springs from a secret root of pride. To put it in other words, you are simply hurt and upset at seeing yourself for who you really are.

If the Lord should be so merciful as to give you a true spirit of His humility, you will not be surprised at your faults, your failures, and even your own basic nature.

The more clearly you see your true self, the clearer you will see how miserable your self nature really is; and the more you will abandon your whole being to God.”

So is God being a big ol’ meany? No! He’s allows difficulties **not to torture us** but to humble us so that we’ll abandon ourselves to Him. Why? Because that’s when we grow in God’s grace. And **unless we grow in God’s grace** we won’t grow in His power. And if we don’t grow in His power we’ll end up being weak and ineffective Christians all the days of our lives. 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 humble us **and** to make us more **powerful** Christians 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 **eighth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Make Us More Joyful**.

Acts 20:35 “In everything I’ve done, I have demonstrated to you how necessary it is to work on behalf of the weak and not exploit them. You’ll not likely go wrong here if you keep remembering that our Master said, You’re far happier giving than getting.”

Now according to our text here, Jesus, in one sentence reveals the secret to a truly joyful life. And that is this. If you want more joy in your life then don’t get more things in your life but **give away more of your life**.

What? Hey, wait a second that's not what society says is it? And people this is precisely the problem. It sounds foreign today because we live in a society that declares just the opposite of what Jesus says to do for joy, right? And we wonder why everyone's so unhappy all the time! They've got it backwards!

People of God, whether you realize it or not, our world is now consumed with me, myself and I, **the unholy trinity**. We live in a world of unprecedented selfishness. We want our fast food even faster. We want our paychecks paid on demand. And we want to be pampered with all the so-called comforts of life and we want them NOW! Our society is pumping out a whole new generation of people who have **thankless attitudes** and could care less about the needs of others let alone getting around to serving their fellow man. In fact, our society has now created a subculture out of selfishness and we usually call them snobs, like this lady.

“There was a self-centered snobbish lady who was visiting a modern art museum one day, and while she was there gazing at a particular picture, she turned to an attendant standing nearby and said, ‘This, I suppose, is one of those hideous representations you call modern art?’

‘No, Madam,’ replied the attendant, ‘That one’s called a mirror.’”

You know, there's a lot of truth to that joke. That lady thought she was high and mighty but by looking in the mirror she saw just how ugly her selfishness and snobbery really was didn't she? And I don't know about you

guys, but I've yet to run into a selfish person who's just **bubbling with joy** wherever they go. No. They're usually full of emptiness and bitterness, aren't they? So people, is it any wonder that a society **who lives for nothing but serving themselves** is full of people, **even Christians**, who are empty and bitter about life?

So out of mercy do you know what God does to protect us from a life of selfishness? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties and voila! We find out real fast that life doesn't revolve around me myself and I after all. And we see that **it's an illusion** to think that you're always going to **get what you want** out of life.

So is God being a big ol' meany? No! He's teaching us a powerful lesson. He trying to get us to see that a life of selfishness is a one-way ticket to a life of emptiness! People, listen clearly to the words of Jesus. **True joy comes NOT by having others serving us** as society would say. That's not reality. It's a lie and that sets people up for a life full of heartaches and broken dreams. **True joy comes in serving others!** Why? Because it's more blessed to give than to receive! 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 insure that we learn to **give away our lives** and thus **be**

filled with the joy of the Lord. 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 **ninth reason** why God allows difficulties to occur is **To Make Us More Loving.**

Matthew 5:43-44,46 "You're familiar with the old written law, Love your friend, and its unwritten companion, Hate your enemy. I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer. If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that."

Now according to our text, the most effective way of getting rid of our enemies **is not by hating them**, but by what? By loving them, right? And how many of us would like to have more friends and less enemies?

But herein lies our problem. We don't want to love our enemies, do we? No! In fact, if we're honest with ourselves, half of the time if we do get around to praying for them, we're praying that God would destroy them! But people, what did we read? Anybody can hate an enemy, that's no big deal.

Therefore, **Jesus challenges us** to do what? **To show** this world that we're true disciples. How? By loving those who **don't love us**. And folks, whether you realize it or not, every time we refuse to love the stinkers in life, we're acting no different than the world. And nobody's going to believe us when we talk about the love of Jesus. Why? **Because we refuse to demonstrate His love by our actions.** We refuse to give it out!

So out of mercy, do you know what God does? Hey, that's right! He orchestrates a few difficulties **and a few difficult people** to come our way and voila! We get to practice loving people, again and again and again until we get it right. It's kind of like that movie "Groundhog Day". You know, where that guy had to live the same day over and over again until he got it right. People, it's the same thing with us. God will allow us to keep on taking laps with difficulties and difficult people until we learn how to love.

So is God being a big ol' meany? No, not at all. Rather **He's trying to use us to show His love to an unloving world**. Why? Because that's what our world needs. If our society is going to get out of the pit of despair it's in, it will not be from talking about love, but in **doing** something about it like Jesus did.

"A **man** fell into a pit and couldn't get himself out. So a subjective person came along and said, 'I feel for you down there.'

Then an **objective person** walked by and said, 'It's logical that someone would fall down there.'

A **Pharisee** said, 'Only bad people fall into pits.'

A **mathematician** calculated the precise angle in which he fell into the pit.

A **news reporter** wanted the exclusive story on the pit.

An **IRS agent** asked if he was paying taxes on the pit.

A **self-pitying person** said, 'You haven't seen anything until you've seen my pit!'

A **psychologist** noted, ‘Your mother and father are to blame for your being in that pit.’

A **self-esteem therapist** said, ‘Believe in yourself and you can get out of that pit.’

An **optimist** said, ‘Things could get worse.’

A **pessimist** claimed, ‘Things WILL get worse.’

And **Jesus**, seeing the man, took him by the hand and loved him by lifting him out of the pit.”

People of God, if we really want to show the world that we’re true Christians, then we’re going to start loving people, even the stinkers. And if we really want to lift our society out of the pit it’s in, then we’ve got to take them by the hand, **just like Jesus did with us**, and not pound them down with hate, but pull them up with love. 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 God’s love is displayed in an unloving world so that 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 in full control of **all our problems** doesn’t help soothe things over.

“Do we find repulsive a God who gives the nod to our tragedies? Think about the alternative. Imagine a God who *didn't* deliberately permit the smallest details of your particular sorrows.

What if you're trials *weren't* screened by any divine plan? What if God insisted on a hands-off policy towards the tragedies swimming your way? Think what this would mean.

First, the world would be worse, much worse, absolutely intolerable – for everyone – every second. Try to conceive of lucifer unrestrained. Left to his own, the devil would make Jobs of us all.

The Third Reich would have lasted forever. Your head would be mounted on satan's wall above his fireplace. Human sacrifice would entertain basketball crowds at halftime. 'Child Molesting Techniques' would be taught at community colleges.

The only reason things aren't worse is that God curbs evil. 'satan had *asked* to sift you like wheat,' Jesus told Peter – we can be certain the old snake didn't check in with God out of politeness. He *had* to get permission, which means that he operates under constraints.

Evil can only raise its head where God deliberately backs away – always for reasons that are specific, wise, and good, but often hidden during this present life. If God didn't control evil, the result would be evil uncontrolled. God permits what He hates to achieve what He loves.”

People of God, I don't know about you, but there's nothing more comforting to me than knowing that no matter what I go through in life, it has occurred because and **only because** God has **filtered it for my highest good**. Therefore, even though I may not see it or understand it at that time **it must serve a good and loving purpose**. Why? Because it came directly from the hand of a good and loving God. 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."
