

**“And this Gospel,”  
shall be preached...  
Matthew 24:14**

**Sermon Summaries from Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God**

# **WHY DOES GOD ALLOW CHRISTIANS TO HAVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS?**

By Dennis Luker

Why does God allow us, His people, to have serious problems? We are sincere in desiring to obey Him. We are striving to be loyal to Him. We are hanging in there, doing His Work and trying to keep His commandments. So why does God allow us to have trials, sicknesses, job problems and sometimes confusion in our Christian lives?

You might answer, “Well, so we can grow in faith.” Yes, but that’s not all of it. The Bible gives some specific, detailed reasons as to why God allows us to have difficulties.

## **Trials Promised**

It is important for us as Christians to maintain a positive attitude whenever we undergo trials and problems. We need to understand why we have them, or we may get discouraged and give up. We may throw up our hands and say, “Oh, what’s the use?” We have to take each trial as it comes and learn from it, or we won’t pass the further tests that will come later on.

Our goal is to enter the Kingdom of God. But remember what Paul and Barnabas told some who had this same goal centuries ago: “And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that *we must through much tribulation*

*enter into the kingdom of God”* (Acts 14:21-22).

We are going to have trials in this life. There is no other way to enter God’s Kingdom. Right up until the day Christ returns, He is going to be testing us to see what kind of people we are, what kind of attitudes we have and what kind of character we are developing. From now until the end of this age world conditions and conditions in our lives are not going to settle down—our tests have only just begun.

Even though we obey God, we are going to have trials. But why? We must remain positive about them so they can promote our Christian growth.

## **To Bring Us to Real Repentance**

First, God allows us to have problems to bring us to real repentance.

Repentance is not just something you “get” when you are baptized. Repentance is something we go through daily, because we all slip and sin and make mistakes daily. We still have a lot of vanity and human nature with which to contend.

Paul was inspired to reveal that it is the goodness of God that leads us to initial repentance (Rom. 2:4). You come to realize that you have been breaking God’s commandments—you realize you have been sinning—and you begin to turn and go the opposite way. You are baptized and receive God’s Holy Spirit.

But after you've been called by God, He continues to lead you to even deeper repentance. He will lead you to a deeper understanding of yourself and of what repentance is all about, and give you a recognition of the carnal motives we can have as human beings. You will become aware of the areas where you are still defying God. The ultimate purpose of repentance is that you come to a place where instead of protesting, "Yes, God, but . . ." in reply to His commands, you merely say, "Yes, Lord," and obey.

God speaks to us through the example of our forefathers, ancient Israel. He warned that if they did not hearken unto His voice and keep all of His commandments, He would send numerous curses on them (Deut. 28:15).

Israel had made an agreement with God. They said they would obey Him, for which He promised blessings. But when they stopped following His ways, He would punish them to bring them to repentance: "Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed . . . Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart" (verses 45-47).

God did have to punish Israel for their lack of repentance. But these same warnings apply to us today. The book of Revelation predicts many horrible plagues that are going to be poured out on this earth very shortly, because of our sins.

"And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth" (Rev. 16:1). So here are the seven last plagues—the manifestations of God's wrath—being poured out upon the earth. If you think you are having a hard time now, what will it be like if you are not being protected by God when these plagues are sent upon mankind?

Verse 9 says that men were scorched with great heat. God controls what is happening. But human beings will continue to blaspheme the name of God who has power over these plagues. They will not repent to give Him glory. "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (verses 10-11).

It's amazing that even at that time when God is trying to humble people and get them to cry out to Him for protection, they won't do it. They stubbornly refuse. They realize there is a God, but they shake their fists at Him and refuse to repent. God says it's going to happen, and the plagues will become more and more intense.

Look at the example of Job's life. Here was a man who did learn the lesson of repentance. God said he was perfect and upright (Job 1:8), but God was dealing with Him because He wanted something more.

God allowed Satan to take away all Job's wealth, destroy His children and afflict him physically. What if this happened to you? You would probably wonder what was going on. You might say, "What's wrong? I'm righteous. I keep God's commandments. I hate evil. Why is God allowing this?" Job asked all the same questions. But he had to learn a deeper repentance.

Job finally came to the place where he was totally repentant and completely yielded to God (Job 42:1-6). Once you are completely humbled before God, you can begin to have confidence in Him rather than in your own self. Instead of saying, "Well, God, I'm sorry that I did a little bit of wrong in the past, and that I occasionally think a wrong thought," you will deeply abhor all evil in your life. You will have a deep desire to be clean, honest, wholesome, righteous, pure and holy. You will want to be more and more like God.

You will completely surrender your life and will to Him and decide to serve Him no matter what happens to you.

God doesn't allow Christians to have problems to hurt them or for any wrong reason. He wants us to examine our lives, humble ourselves, repent and become better Christians.

### **To Deepen our Conversion**

God wants Christians to bear spiritual fruit. So another reason He allows various problems in our lives is to help us bear this fruit. Some will grow more than others. And God may allow the greatest pressures to come on those who are growing the most, so they may produce even more.

Christ said: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that

bearth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1-2).

You may be doing the best you can in your life's struggles. But God looks down upon you and sees your potential and how much more you can do in life and in His Work and Church. God will not just let you drift along the way you are. He's going to purge you that you may bring forth more fruit—that you may be stronger spiritually.

God the Father is glorified by our bearing much fruit (verse 8). He wants us to rise to the occasion. It's when the pressure is really on in a ball game that you get the most out of an athlete. It's during accidents and other serious situations that people sometimes become heroic and the best really comes out in them. It's when the pressure is on that you find out what is really inside you. God will allow trials in our lives even if we're growing, to help us bear more fruit and grow even more.

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:5-6).

Sometimes we might feel that God doesn't love us any more or He wouldn't put a certain trial or problem upon us. But correction is a sign of God's love. If you don't occasionally as a Christian receive correction through His Word, a brother or sister, a minister or from some other source, you need to pray for God's guidance. Ask Him to give you the trials you need to be growing, and to develop your attitude the way He wants it.

If we don't have God's correction, then we're spiritually illegitimate (verse 8). We don't belong to Him. God's correction is a blessing He gives to those He loves and wants to make part of His Family.

### **To Teach Us More Perfect Obedience**

God also allows us to have trials to teach us more perfect obedience to His laws. Even though we know His commandments, it is possible to let down in keeping God's Sabbath, His Holy Days or His tithing laws. It is possible to disobey God and take it lightly.

David's life is an example of how God deals with people. David states, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept thy word . . . It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Ps. 119:67, 71). God afflicted David, but David realized it was good for him to have

problems. Why? So he could learn God's statutes. Affliction made him examine himself to see what God was trying to teach him.

David understood why he was being tried. He said, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (verse 75). If only we could have that positive attitude when we have trials—that God in faithfulness is helping us grow. It doesn't necessarily mean we are sinning. God is working with us to shape us into His image. In his affliction, David meditated deeply and learned many lessons.

David summarizes this lesson about God's correction in Psalm 118:18, "The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death." God does let Christians die, because He knows what's best for each of us when we have qualified for His Kingdom. But in David's case, he was chastened very sore, but not to death. He lived out a full life and became a man after God's own heart.

Do you ask God to deal with you and show you your wrong attitudes? Never underestimate the importance of prayer and Bible study or take them for granted. The Bible offers invaluable understanding of how to live. You should be getting to the point that you run to God's Word when there is a problem or test in your life or in the Work. Just realize that you need to pray and meditate on God's Word—to be closer to Him and have more of His mind, strength and attitude.

Christ was human. He didn't want to suffer and die like He knew He was going to. He had to go to God in prayer. Hebrews says of Christ, "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9).

God wants us to obey Him wholeheartedly and keep all His laws. He wants us to live by His every word. He's going to teach us just like He did David. David will be king of Israel and teach Israel how to keep God's laws perfectly in the world tomorrow, because he learned how to obey God during his life. We have the same opportunity David had to qualify to serve God eternally.

### **To Develop Compassion in Us**

God sometimes allows suffering, sickness, trials or the loss of a job to teach us compassion and to

teach us how to comfort and help other people. If we didn't have trials and tests, we wouldn't know what it is like for other people to go through these things. We don't have to sin to know it's wrong to sin, but most of us as humans don't really develop sympathy, patience, understanding, gentleness or tenderness for others until we ourselves have gone through the mill of suffering. The people who help other people best are those who have been through the same problems.

This is exactly what Christ did: "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). In other words, Christ understands. He became a human being so He could understand what we go through. God became human like we are and suffered a great deal.

Notice II Corinthians 1:3-5. These verses tell us specifically why God allows us to suffer through all kinds of situations: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."

If we haven't gone through certain tests and received God's help and deliverance, then we can't help other people. You can't strengthen other people spiritually unless you have gone through a situation and learned what God was trying to teach you. If you're still in the trial—if you are weak and don't understand what God is doing—usually you are very negative about it. You lack faith and are not able to be positive. If you've come through a trial and have learned what God was trying to teach you, then you can help others.

### To Qualify Us for Rulership

God also allows us to have trials in the world to qualify us for rulership in His soon-coming Kingdom.

"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one

of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (II Thess. 1:3-4).

Paul goes on to say that these persecutions and tribulations we endure are a token of the righteous judgment of God, that we may be accounted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which we suffer (verse 5).

Peter tells us to not think it strange because we go through difficulties (I Pet. 4:12-13). We should rejoice in that we are partakers of Christ's sufferings—then, when His glory is revealed, we may be "glad also with exceeding joy."

God is sorting out those He has called and is looking for rulers, teachers and people to strengthen the faith of others. He wants to see who will stand firm with what He taught them—who will *commit themselves to it*.

The tests are not over yet, but God calls them "light affliction, which is but for a moment, [and] worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" forever, no matter what we have to go through (II Cor. 4:17).

Review the reasons why God allows us to go through trials and have pressures on us. Whether our problems are related to marriage, children, work or personal matters, they are all for a purpose. If we know the purpose and what God is trying to teach us, we can get the help we need to endure.

God is faithful and will not allow us to have a trial too great to bear (I Cor. 10:13). You can depend upon Him. He will supply help and strength. He will not let you fail.

All the suffering of this life—~~everything~~ we have to go through—is not even worthy of being mentioned (Rom. 8:18). The exceeding joy of being in God's Kingdom will make the burdens we shoulder now seem light and short. They are nothing in comparison to the happiness that lies ahead for all eternity.

Romans 8:28 is a promise from God to those who love Him and will stay close to Him. If you will obey God, everything is going to work for your good in the long run. If you come out of your problems a humble, faithful, loyal, strong Christian with the right attitude, God will turn everything to your benefit.