

# GOD'S CALL

## Major themes in the Scriptures

### The wisdom of God

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “The wisdom of God”, in seeking to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

God is perfectly good and infinitely wise, yet He is often misunderstood in what He seeks to do in the universe He has created. This is especially so in His plans for our eternal well-being where suffering is involved.

We will seek the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

[End of summary]

We all know that God is the Creator of all things. He is almighty, He is all-powerful, He is all-knowing. We also know that God is a loving God, a holy God.

But in spite of that, very often we question Him in His wisdom: Why does He do this? Why does He allow this to take place? And sometimes, we question in a manner that implies that God is not good, that God is not wise, God is not caring enough.

So it is helpful for us to ponder over this: Do we believe that God is perfectly good and He is infinitely wise?

The apostle Paul was a very knowledgeable man. He went through many things in life. He was very confident in himself in one point in time. But he came to a point where he recognized that the wisdom of God surpassed all his understanding. Unless he came to God to seek Him and to identify with Him, there were many things he could not understand.

**Romans 11: 33-36**

- 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!
- 34 For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR?
- 35 Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN?
- 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him *be* the glory forever. Amen.

How deeply could Paul express his wonder and awe at the wisdom and knowledge of God!

If we appreciate God more deeply in His wisdom, it will help us greatly in the way we go through our lives each day. We would not want to walk in our own wisdom. We would not want to follow the world.

There are many questions we may ask when we think of what God has done, to the degree that we understand.

For example: Why did God place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden? Was it really necessary? Wouldn't it have been better if there had not been such a tree and Adam and Eve could walk with God happily, obey Him and do the things that would be so helpful, and all of us as the descendants of Adam and Eve could also live happily in the Garden of Eden? Wouldn't that have been much better?

But look at the consequence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: Adam and Eve sinned and as a result, God's judgment came upon them and the world became different. We now live in a world that is not pleasant. There is so much of suffering and pain. Why did God do that?

And why did God allow Satan to tempt Adam and Eve and all mankind? Satan is so evil. His intentions are bad. Why did God not just deal with him, destroy him? God is almighty. Why does He not destroy the evil one? Why allow the evil one to tempt Adam and Eve? And not just Adam and Eve – he is still actively at work today, seeking to destroy anyone who desires to follow God. He is like a roaring lion, seeking to devour whoever he can. He is out to inflict pain and suffering, and he enjoys it. Why does God allow such an evil being to continue in this world?

Then we may ask: Why has God allowed so much suffering in this world? Is that necessary? God is a loving God. Is it not so that suffering is very painful to Him? Why would He want to allow suffering?

We often may not understand, especially when it happens to us. When we go through difficult times, the more difficult it is, the easier it is for us to question: "Is it necessary? Why does God allow it?"

And then we look at the way that God has worked in history. We may ask: Why did God choose Israel from all the nations of the world, to so specially reveal Himself and His ways to them? Isn't that favouritism, isn't that unfair? Why choose one small nation in which God would manifest His glory, His greatness, His wisdom, His knowledge? Why does God treat the nation of Israel so differently from other nations?

And we may also ask: Why did God choose the path of the cross? It doesn't seem to make sense. To the Jews it is a stumbling block; to the Greeks, it is foolishness. Why did God choose such a path, the path of the cross? It does not seem to make sense to our natural thinking.

It is important for us when we ponder over the wisdom of God, never to forget that the wisdom of God must always be understood in the context of His moral perfection that includes love, holiness, justice, mercy and grace. If we forget that, we will easily misunderstand what God is seeking to do.

Sometimes, we think of God's wisdom in a very limited way. We say, "God is a loving God. Therefore, He will not allow such a thing to happen because a God of love cannot allow such injustice, for example, to take place. He will help us, He will rescue us. He will not allow us to go through such difficult times."

But God does. Why? Because God is not only love: He is holiness and He is perfect justice, and in the midst of that He shows mercy, He shows grace. He does not always destroy the wicked immediately. He still allows them time, opportunity to learn, to repent. He also gives us time to think through our lives, to consider how we should respond.

Today, the Lord willing, I want to concentrate on this area of suffering in relation to the wisdom of God. This is a very big subject, difficult to understand and easily misunderstood. But we need to seek to appreciate it because it is so common in our lives and we can so readily respond in the wrong way: Whether it be with regard to ourselves, trying to understand what we are going through, or as we observe other people, we may also not quite understand what is going on.

We must remember that not all suffering is the same. Two persons suffering the same thing outwardly may be suffering for totally different reasons, and the reasons can be opposite. If we are not close to God, if we are not discerning, if we do not understand what is going on in the lives of people, then it is easy for us to misinterpret, whether it be ourselves or other people.

So let us look at various passages in the Scriptures to seek to understand what God is seeking to do when He allows or brings about suffering. Sometimes, God allows suffering to take place. At other times, He is the one who brings suffering into our lives directly. Whichever it is, remember: God is sovereign. Even Satan is under God's rulership. So Satan has no power to exercise beyond what God allows him. So as we look at this, we can understand better what God is seeking to do.

**1 Corinthians 11: 27-32**

- 27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.
- 28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.
- 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.
- 31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.
- 32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

The apostle Paul was very distressed by the conduct of the Corinthian Christians. They were selfish; they were preoccupied with themselves, what they wanted, what they liked. They did not bother about others. When they came together, they were inconsiderate in the way they ate and drank even as they sought to celebrate the Lord's Supper.

So he says: "...he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly." If there isn't the proper spirit towards God, towards the Lord's Supper and what it is meant to be, and towards others participating in the body of Christ; if we do not have the right spirit, then there will be judgment that comes about.

He says: "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep." "...weak and sick" and "sleep" are a reference to the physical: physically weak, physically sick, physically dead. And this is part of the judgment of God on the people who were irreverent, who were inconsiderate, who responded negatively in the situation.

Why did God allow such suffering in that context? What is the reason? The apostle Paul explains to us: "...when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world."

So in this context, it is an expression of God's discipline. If we go astray as His children, He may scourge us, He may discipline us so that we will learn and respond positively in the hope that we will not be condemned along with the world. But if we do not learn well, if we do not respond properly to God's discipline, then we might end up being condemned along with the world. God disciplines us with suffering in order to help us. He wants to protect us from a very negative outcome. He wants to save us and deliver us.

So in the midst of suffering, if we learn well, we will benefit from God's discipline. That does not mean that whenever we suffer a physical illness, we should condemn ourselves, we should think: "It must be I have done something very bad." That is a situation that the evil one can make use of and accuse us, so that we live in fear, we live in a spirit of condemnation; we constantly think our life is very bad just because we are physically ill or because we are tired, we are sick in some form or another. That is not always the case.

Sickness and weakness and death are not always the result of God's discipline. It can be an attack from the evil one; it can be from natural causes; it can be from various reasons that may take place.

So to understand the meaning of what we are going through, we need to come before the Lord to ask Him to help us understand what is taking place. And if we recognize that there is anything wrong in our lives, to correct them. But we need not be so afraid; neither should we readily condemn ourselves because something seems amiss.

### **2 Corinthians 12: 7-10**

- 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!
- 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me.
- 9 And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.
- 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Why did Paul suffer this thorn in the flesh? It must have been something very difficult for him to bear. Otherwise, he would not have prayed three times for the Lord to remove it. He probably thought that it would hinder his ministry and so, he asked the Lord to remove the thorn in the flesh.

Although it is referred to as a messenger of Satan, it is quite clear that in this context, God is the one who intended the thorn in the flesh to be present. He said: "...there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!"

Satan does not want us to be kept from exalting ourselves. He wants us to exalt ourselves. But this thorn in the flesh was given by God to help Paul not to exalt himself. So the reason is given to us. God has His reason for this thorn in the flesh.

Some may think (if we do not read the passage carefully) that the thorn in the flesh was a punishment from God: that Paul was proud and so, he needed to be kept humble. That would be a wrong interpretation. It is quite clear and it is stated here: "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself!"

So we are told the reason for the thorn in the flesh was the surpassing greatness of the revelations. If God had not given to Paul all those great revelations, the thorn in the flesh might not have been necessary. Maybe it still could be, but might not be so. But we are told that in this context, it was because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations. Why is it that way?

God knows that it is easy for man to become proud. It is easy for us to be self-confident. It is easy for us to exalt ourselves. So when God helps us, when God teaches us, when God gives us greater revelations, it is easy for us to become proud. We exalt ourselves: "We are better than other people. We have achieved more. We understand so much more." So this is an area that all of us must be careful about. We want to know more, we want to learn, we want to grow. That is right and God wants to show to us. But with these revelations, there comes the danger of exalting ourselves.



So we are told: "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me". Torment is something very difficult and Paul had to experience that. And God did so because He wanted Paul to grow in spiritual quality through suffering and to deepen his oneness with Him.

Notice that when Paul implored the Lord three times for it to leave him, the Lord said to him, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Why did not the Lord answer Paul and say: "You need the thorn in the flesh. I am giving you the thorn in the flesh to keep you from exalting yourself. Therefore, I am not going to remove it." Why did not the Lord answer him that way because that was the reason?

No, the Lord said, "My grace is sufficient for you". The two are related. God had given Paul great revelations. It would be easy for him to exalt himself. He needed to know how weak he was. He needed to understand that whatever he could do was in the context of God's grace, God's enabling. He needed to learn to depend on God each moment of his life. And so He said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. The more you understand your weakness, the greater you will appreciate and experience the power of God."

Many of us do not experience the power of God because we want to be powerful in ourselves. We are so afraid to be weak and so we build our strength, so that we do not need God, so that we can go through many situations of life with confidence and people will look up to us and respect us. We are very afraid to be weak. But it is in the midst of our weakness that we behold His glory, we appreciate His power and we understand how powerful God is: He can sustain us, enable us through any situation. He is the almighty God.

So the apostle Paul said: "Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me." As he understood, as he realized more and more his own weakness, he would experience more and more the power of Christ and this would help him not to exalt himself. So he would learn not to exalt himself by understanding more deeply and growing in his oneness with the Lord.

He would come to see there is nothing to boast about. And should the time come when he had learnt it well, it could be that the Lord would then remove the thorn in the flesh.

But there was a purpose in it. God does not want people to suffer unnecessarily. God does not delight in suffering but, in the pain of His heart He allows suffering in order to do us good in order to accomplish His purposes.

So he says: "Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." It is important to note this phrase: "for Christ's sake".

The apostle Paul was not talking about weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, difficulties that arose from his self-centred life: that kind he had to repent; that kind he had to deal with. But he was talking about weaknesses, insults, distresses, persecutions, difficulties for Christ's sake. Because he sought to live for Christ, because he was faithful to Him, he would experience various of these difficulties, he would go through that kind of weakness that would help him to be strong. And so he said: "...for when I am weak, then I am strong."

So God wants to help us to grow in spiritual quality through suffering. If we appreciate that, then we will benefit and we will deepen our oneness with Him.

Let us turn to **Numbers 12: 1-2**.

**Numbers 12: 1-2**

- 1 Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman);
- 2 and they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" And the LORD heard it.

Here, we are told Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman. If we read this by itself, it may seem as if Miriam and Aaron were right. It seems as if Moses did the wrong thing in marrying the Cushite woman.

However, when we read the two verses together, we can see that what seems to be right is in reality very wrong. Notice they said, "Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" Their motive was not the glory of God. Their concern was not that Moses would do the right thing. We are not told specifically that marrying the Cushite woman was wrong, but it seemed to be to Aaron and Miriam. But the point is their concern was their own glory. Their concern was to receive credit for their lives, to bring honour to themselves.

"Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us as well?" So they wanted attention, they wanted the position, and they were jealous of Moses in that situation. And we are told: And the LORD heard it. They were not seeking to honour the Lord. They were not concerned for Moses. And so, God was angry.

**Numbers 12: 9-13**

- 9 So the anger of the LORD burned against them and He departed.
- 10 But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam *was* leprous, as *white as* snow. As Aaron turned toward Miriam, behold, she *was* leprous.
- 11 Then Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not account *this* sin to us, in which we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned.
- 12 "Oh, do not let her be like one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes from his mother's womb!"
- 13 Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "O God, heal her, I pray!"

The verses in between tell us God's response to the situation. God was angry with Miriam and Aaron. God had appointed Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt. And Aaron was called to contribute his part, but they were not satisfied. And so, the anger of God was manifested.

We can say in this context, it was punishment from God. God was angry and He expressed His anger in punishment through suffering. So when we are seriously negative in spirit, God may punish us and it can at times be severe.

In this context, Aaron acknowledged: "...we have acted foolishly and in which we have sinned." So they acknowledged their sin and they sought for help. Moses prayed for Miriam and God answered Moses.

So this is another kind of situation when suffering can come about. God can inflict suffering on us directly if we sin in a serious manner. But still, in many of these instances, there is still hope of forgiveness if we learn from it, if we are prepared to come before God and ask for His forgiveness.

But at times, there may be no further opportunity: Korah, Abiram, Dathan - they perished very rapidly from this earth. Ananias and Sapphira died soon after what they did that was displeasing to God.

God may act differently in different situations but there is an underlying meaning in all that He does. God is very wise why He would do it this way or the other. We need to understand what He is seeking to accomplish.

God wants us to understand we cannot take sin lightly. We cannot say: "God is a loving God, He will always forgive."

God does not always forgive. God can be very angry and He can deal with us severely. So let us not be presumptuous – we can just do whatever we like. We must always be humble before God, ask Him to teach us, help us.

Let us look at another passage that involves suffering that is intense and difficult.

**Job 1: 6-12**

- 6 Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
- 7 The LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it."
- 8 The LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."
- 9 Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing?"
- 10 "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.
- 11 "But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face."
- 12 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

When we read the account of Job, we may be impressed with the fact that Satan inflicted so much suffering on Job. But if we stand back and look at the whole picture, we realize that it is God who initiated this. God was the one who said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." In one sense, we can say God was provoking Satan to respond. God wanted Satan to respond. "What do you think of Job? Job is a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."

God in His wisdom allowed this to happen for a good reason: There are many lessons we can learn from this account in the **book of Job**. And throughout the ages, many have pondered over this: What does it mean? It is so rich and so meaningful.

Notice that Satan answered the Lord: "Does Job fear God for nothing? "Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land."

Does it strike us that Satan was able to respond to God in that way? Job was just one man in the whole of the inhabitants of the earth. God is omniscient, He knows everyone. How is it Satan was also aware of who Job was?

We can say basically Satan was created very powerful and most likely, his ability to travel to and fro on the earth is very great. He said: "...roaming about on the earth and walking around on it": not just in one place – the whole earth. He could travel through the whole earth very quickly. He is not omniscient, he is not omnipresent but he has great abilities and he knows many things.

So he could respond to God immediately: "Yes, I can see you have treated Job very well. You have blessed him. So of course he will love you. But just take away what he has. He will curse you." So God says: "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him."

So God is the one who permitted suffering for Job and it was very intense, very difficult for him: first his possessions, later his own body. He suffered greatly, and Job misunderstood God: he thought that God was punishing him unjustly. He was upset. He said: "I will argue with Him." "What have I done wrong? Why are You punishing me?"

But God was not punishing him. God was allowing him to be tested.

How will you respond in the midst of suffering?

You say you trust God. Will you still trust Him in the midst of suffering? You say God is perfect and holy. Is He still perfect and holy when you are suffering?

This is an important question. And Satan was right from this angle: that if we love God just because He has blessed us, then our faith in God is shallow.

So God allowed Satan to test Job because Job's faith was not shallow. Job's faith had sufficient depth and God allowed him to be tested. But that does not mean that Job would certainly stand. It is possible that Job could have failed and not recovered.

But God watched over him and God helped him. So when Job responded wrongly and he faltered, God spoke to him in such a way that Job beheld the glory of God and his focus shifted back to God and he repented in dust and ashes. He affirmed his love for God more deeply.

And so, God showed that it is possible for man descended from Adam and Eve to live a meaningful life before God, to be faithful to Him. In the midst of suffering and pain and difficulties, it is possible for us to honour Him and to stand with Him.

So God allows us to be tested with suffering to develop quality in our being and as a testimony in the spiritual realm. The angels were watching; the evil spirits were watching: What would happen to Job? Is his faith real? Would he honour God or would he crumble when difficulties came?

And so, God has His reasons. He always has a good reason in what He does.

**John 9: 1-7**

- 1 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth.
- 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?"
- 3 Jesus answered, "*It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*"
- 4 "*We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.*"
- 5 "*While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.*"
- 6 When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes,
- 7 and said to him, "*Go, wash in the pool of Siloam*" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came *back* seeing.

So here again, we see how people can misinterpret. The disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" They did not understand what God was seeking to do. Then Jesus answered, "No, this is not the case. It is *so that the works of God might be displayed in him.*"

God allows suffering, difficulties and pain in order to help us to behold His glory, to see His light and to appreciate His working in this world. We are often so blind to what God is doing and God may have to speak to us in ways that are not so common, that will draw our attention and help us to think through about life. But even then, not many will still listen.

And so in this context, the Lord Jesus worked the works of God. He healed the blind man. The Lord Jesus is the Light of the world in the physical realm, in the spiritual realm. He brought this about to communicate a spiritual lesson and the response of the blind man as well as the religious leaders of the day form a very important, meaningful lesson for us to learn. There is so much we can learn from this incident of the healing of the blind man and what happened after that. God is wise.



I want to address this issue: Very often, when Christians go through difficulties in life, especially when it is more difficult, we become unsettled, we become unhappy and very often, we question God: "God, why must this happen to me? What have I done wrong? Why do I have to suffer like this?"

And in various situations, our spirit of worship is affected. We no longer worship God in the same way as we used to when things were well.

We were able to praise God so freely. We told Him how much we loved Him, what we would do for Him. But in times of difficulty, we are no longer able to express that kind of love for Him and commitment to Him. We doubt the wisdom of God: "Does it have to be this way?"

It is important for us to appreciate that God does not want us to suffer unless it has a meaningful purpose. Suffering is very painful to God and He does not want us to suffer. We must appreciate that.

So, how much difficulty God must have gone through to see His children suffering in various situations of life! He has to endure it. Do we understand how difficult it is for Him? We think it is difficult for us. As far as I can understand, it is more difficult for Him. For a parent to see a child suffering greatly, it can be more difficult than what the child is going through. If a parent really loves the child, it can be excruciating pain to see that.

So, we need to understand that for God, it is very difficult. And remember: God Himself suffered the greatest suffering ever possible.

The event of the cross is an expression of the greatest suffering ever possible, and God went through that for our well-being.

**Matthew 26: 37-39**

- 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.
- 38 Then He \*said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."
- 39 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Knowing who the Lord Jesus is – His courage, His preparedness to go through suffering, His love for the world – we can see how difficult a time it must have been for Him, for Him to say, "...if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me".

It was a deep agony for Him as He faced the event of the cross.

Do we understand this, do we appreciate this: what He has gone through for us? God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?

God wants to give us all good things but it must be on the right basis. God is not just a God of love but His love is a love of holiness, a love with justice and righteousness.

And so, the event of the cross was necessary in order to save mankind. We cannot be saved without the cross. God cannot just forgive us. So He Himself had to go through the most painful suffering.

If we understand that, we may never ever question any further God's wisdom, whether He understands what we are going through.

God understands it so very well.

It is we who do not understand Him. We do not understand what He has gone through for us.

**Matthew 26: 51-54**

- 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.
- 52 Then Jesus \*said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.
- 53 "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?
- 54 "How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?"

The Lord Jesus was fully conscious that He need not have gone through the cross. He need not have suffered so deeply. He said: "...do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? I need not go through the cross if I do not want to. It is not forced upon Me. It is voluntary. I gladly go through it."

"How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?" What does that mean? It means that His commitment to fulfil the will of God is absolute.

Are we prepared to live like that: We are committed to fulfil the will of God whatever it costs, whatever it means? If we do not do that, then we will waver when situations become too difficult. But the Lord Jesus never wavered. He said, "...yet not as I will, but as You will." The will of God was all that He was concerned about because the will of God is perfect: morally good, infinitely wise.

Do we believe that? If we do not believe that, then we are not believing in the true God: we are believing in a god of our own imagination. The true God is perfectly good, infinitely wise. If we believe that, then we must learn to be true to what we believe. Abide by that.

The Lord Jesus did so voluntarily because of love and to fulfil what is best: the will of God.

I want to share with you a song that seeks to communicate some of these issues.

It is a conversation between two elderly men spending some time in fellowship: The first man is going through a very hard time. He is very distressed. He finds it very difficult to carry on in this world and he shares that with his friend: in the first verse.

In the second verse, he recalls his earlier years when life seemed so happy and pleasant, not so difficult. But yet, he also knew that that might not last.

In the third stanza, his friend responds to him: Whatever happens, there is a reason and in every situation of life, we can rejoice. Why? Because ultimately, we can decide what kind of person we will be and this will have relevance for eternity.

God who has created us is a God of love. He has demonstrated His love for us on the cross. So whatever situation we go through, we must always pray, so that we will know God's way and when we walk in Him, we will find true fulfilment in our lives. So that is the fourth stanza.

The last two stanzas are the response of the first man.

As he listened to his friend, he was touched. He responded more deeply to God and he begins to appreciate: Whatever happens, God has a good reason. We always can choose what path we want to take. And if we choose to live for God and in Him, then there will be true freedom and meaning. In every situation that we go through, we can deepen in our faith and ultimately find life truly satisfying when our lives completely belong to God: our heart is completely His.

I will sing to you in the hope that it may help to communicate some of these issues, to appreciate the wisdom of God.

## **Whatever happens**

I live in this world: I face a struggle!

Pain and distress... I find no rest!

Why am I here? I'm filled with fear!

Each day I live, I can find no relief!

There were times of pleasure, Without much pressure;

Friends seemed so kind, And life seemed so fine!

Yet I did know: All these would go!

What would I have... When there's nothing left?

Whatever happens... There is a reason!

Sorrows or joys... We can rejoice!

For deep inside, We can decide:

What we will be... Through eternity!

The God who made us, Has shown He loves us!

Peace or dismay, We still should pray:

That we may know, Which way to go!

And find in Him... Our perfect dream!

Whatever happens... He has good reason!

Sorrows or joys... I have a choice!

If deep inside, I choose what's right:

In Him I live... I will find full relief!

Whatever happens... My faith I deepen!

Sorrows or joys... He is my Joy!

As deep inside, In Him abide,

So shall I be... His eternally!

It is important for us, as we go through different situations in life, to always remember that God is perfectly good and He is infinitely wise. If we trust Him, if we walk with Him, then there is always something that He wants to accomplish in us when there is suffering. There is always a meaning; there is always a good reason.

The sad thing is that we often do not benefit from such a time. We do not properly come to God to ask Him to teach us, to help us to understand what He is seeking to do. If we do come to Him, we will behold His glory, we will understand more deeply His greatness and we can participate in what He is seeking to do.

There are many things that can be wrong in our lives that God has difficulty teaching us and showing to us. Sometimes, He has to do it through suffering. And we need to listen to Him in order to recognize and to correct that.

There are times when we are living well, we honour Him, and suffering comes our way. But it is not that God is angry with us. We should not become discouraged. There are times when the evil one wants to destroy us and cause us to turn away from God. We must deepen in our faith in God.

If we are sensitive to God, we deepen in our walk with Him then every situation in life will be meaningful. We can rejoice whether in times of joy or in times of sorrow. There will be meaning and we can properly thank God for His presence with us and for what He is seeking to do.

We must be careful not to think like the people of the world. There are many things that God does that may seem foolish as far as the world is concerned. The apostle Paul tells us: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." [1 Corinthians 1: 21-24]

So let us, as we come before the Lord, ask Him to help us to understand more deeply the greatness of His wisdom, the depth of His love.

There are times when we live well and we seem so very victorious and there are times when we live well but we may seem defeated.

**Hebrews 11** tells us of situations where there were people who by faith were able to conquer kingdoms, perform *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, but there were others who lived in faith, yet they were tortured; they experienced mockings and scourgings, there were chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated. And they were described as people “of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.” It seemed as if they were defeated.

But God was watching over them and God was pleased with their expression of faith in Him. It does not mean that all these people described were perfectly spiritual, but there were qualities of faith that God appreciated in them. But even in the midst of that, there can be different expressions.

So let us learn to understand what God is seeking to do, identify with Him, rejoice in Him and to the degree we can see what God wants to accomplish, let us set our hearts with Him and pray in that direction, so that His will will be done.

Moses understood how to pray so that even when God wanted to destroy the nation of Israel and make of Moses a greater nation, Moses said, “No, do not do that.” And God listened to Moses.



God wants us to exercise ourselves, to understand the spiritual principles of His kingdom: What is He seeking to accomplish?

Can we identify with Him? Can we then pray together with Him in the direction of His will? If so, then we will be working together with Him as His co-workers. God wants us to co-labour with Him not just as obedient slaves, but as people who understand His will.

He wants to call us His friends. Can we rise to a higher level to be His true friends?

Let us then ask the Lord to help us to appreciate more of what He has done for us, what He wants to do in the days ahead and let us live for Him as we should.

Let us especially thank God for the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only through the cross that we can find forgiveness, life and freedom.