

1 Peter 1

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Preacher: Jonathan Worthington

[0 : 00] Thank you, Myrtle. We're going to think about some of these verses, as well as some others in the Bible, for a few moments now.

I don't know a lot of things. I'm sure that many of you have experienced ignorance in your life. For example, when my little three-year-old, many of you know Anya, when she looked up at me not too long ago, she had an inquisitive look.

She was obviously wrestling with something very deep. So I was preparing myself to answer a profound question, something I probably knew an answer to. And she looked up at me and she said, Daddy, can anybody not keep a secret for one minute?

And I thought, what does that even mean? Can anybody not keep a secret for one minute? I wasn't ready for that question.

I don't know. I don't know what to do with that. And I find that not just with a three-year-old, but with so many questions that other people have. They ask the question and I think, well, I'll know the answer or at least something helpful.

[1 : 20] And then they ask a question and I think, good grief. I don't know. There are so many things that I don't understand. And that's common, I think, to all people.

There are limits to our knowledge, limits to our understanding. I do know this, that suffering is common to all people. It's a common question.

Probably every single person in here has wrestled with this. Why am I suffering? Or maybe not me personally, but why is somebody else suffering?

Why does suffering even exist? And what can help when I'm experiencing this or when somebody I love is experiencing this? This is a very common question.

Everyone faces it. And most of us look for answers, for exact answers to why I am suffering or why a friend is suffering at any moment.

[2 : 23] And that's a place where humans have to say, we don't know exactly. We don't know the exact reason why any of us are suffering at any precise moment.

Sometimes it is obvious. When we do something really stupid and we have the consequences of that, it's fairly obvious why we're suffering. But so many times it's not. So this morning, as we start contemplating this a bit more from God's Word, I want to draw our attention to two qualities of God that don't exactly provide an answer, but that I think are fundamental to help us steer, to help us navigate in those moments when we're confused and in pain.

I'm more convinced of this all the time, that God's wisdom and God's goodness are two things that we need to keep in mind. God's self-sacrificial goodness, in fact.

God's wisdom and His goodness. Before we actually launch into some of these passages, what is wisdom? I think we need to define that first.

What exactly is wisdom? The Bible talks about a person being wise in a lot of things. One thing it says is, a person is wise in sewing.

[3 : 47] Meaning, a piece of cloth and a thread. That's one place in the Bible. It says, a person has wisdom in sewing. A particular person. And it has that type of strange statement a lot of places.

Wisdom seems to be a very full idea in the Bible. And it seems to get at this point. Skill for living.

Whether that's in a tiny thing like sewing, your skill in doing it well, it calls that wisdom in sewing.

Or in other areas of life, skill for living is wisdom. You know, a lot of people have a lot of knowledge, but they don't really know how to live well.

And we would say, well, they're not wise. It's skill for living. So, how do you define God's wisdom?

What is God's wisdom? Well, we could put it in that same way.

God is the most skilled being at living. At every aspect of life, everything that happens, God is the most skilled at that.

[4 : 52] He knows exactly what to do. Just like that sower knew exactly what to do with sewing because he was wise. God knows exactly what to do in any situation.

He's wise. So, those two things, two characteristics of God, I think will help us navigate suffering. He's wise.

That is, he knows exactly what he's doing. And he's good. He sacrifices himself to benefit others. To care for us. One strange verse in this chapter in 1 Peter that we read is what began to guide me into some of these thoughts.

It's in verse 20. 1 Peter 1, 20. Talking about Jesus slain.

Jesus who poured out his own precious blood to purchase us from our sin and our empty way of life. Jesus was chosen before the creation.

[6 : 05] Before the creation of the world. And he was revealed in these last times for our sake. That phrase, Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world.

That is a tiny window that when you begin to peer through God's thoughts, God's plans, God's desires, before he created anything.

There's just this enormous panorama in front of you. And these two things continue to pop up. What was happening in God's mind before creation? And you keep coming into two things.

God's wisdom and God's goodness. So I want to explore two passages. One about his wisdom before creation. And one about his goodness before creation.

And I hope that this will begin to come together in a very applicable way to our suffering. It may not seem like it quite yet. But I hope that it will. God's wisdom was there before he created anything.

[7 : 08] Let's turn, if you will, to Proverbs. The second passage, we'll turn back to 1 Peter. But right now, let's turn to Proverbs, chapter 8. Proverbs 8.

What was God thinking before he created any of this stuff? And therefore, before suffering existed? Which he did not create. His creations created that.

But before he created anything, what was going on? Proverbs, chapter 8. Let's read verses 22 to 31.

I believe it's on page 642 of your Bibles, if they're the same version as this one. Proverbs 8, 22 to 31. The Lord brought me forth.

Me is wisdom. That's bad grammar. Wisdom is speaking. It's personified. This is a very poetic passage. And so God's wisdom is speaking.

[8 : 08] The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works. Before his deeds of old, I was appointed from eternity. From the beginning, before the world began.

When there were no oceans, I was given birth. When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled in place. Before the hills, I was given birth.

Before he made the earth or its fields. Or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place. When he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep.

When he established the clouds above. And fixed securely the fountains of the deep. When he gave the sea its boundary. So that the waves would not overstep his command.

And when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight. Day after day. Rejoicing always in his presence.

[9 : 07] Rejoicing in his whole world. And delighting in mankind. What was happening before suffering existed?

Before creation existed? The first thing that we can look at here is. God's wisdom was there. What does that mean exactly? There are a few strange statements.

Or I think they're strange. They catch me off guard anyway. The Lord brought me forth. Or the Lord gave birth to me. Some people have taken these statements to say that there was a time when wisdom did not exist.

I don't think that's what this passage is getting at. You can look at it this way. Was there ever a time when God was not wise? When God just didn't know what was going on? And then somehow he created wisdom from nothing.

And then he knew what was going on. This passage is very poetic. And it's trying to emphasize that the Lord is the source of what makes sense. The Lord is the source of wisdom.

[10:14] And so it can use this very colorful language about God giving birth to wisdom. And using that to create the world in this way that makes sense. Really I think it's mainly getting at the fact that from the very beginning.

Even before. God knew exactly what he was doing. At every step of the way. He was wise. He was skilled in everything he did. And he is therefore the source of wisdom.

It also mentions that wisdom was helping. Excuse me. Helping in creation. Like a master workman. I'll just mention that.

I won't develop that. In a moment I'm going to read some statements by Jesus. Where he says some striking things. So I'll just mention that God's wisdom was helping him create.

Another thing I'll just mention. And this is profound. It says at the end. Verse 30. I was filled with delight. Day after day.

[11:18] Rejoicing in God's presence. Rejoicing in his whole world. And delighting in mankind. God in his wisdom was celebrating.

Joyfully. Himself. His own presence. Also. His world that he had created. And humans. We often don't think perhaps about how God is wise.

As he rejoices in humanity. As he looks at humans. He's filled with joy. Now he's also filled with some other emotions. If I can use that word for God.

He's also filled with other ones. But this says that he rejoices over humanity. And the word here. Mankind. In the original language that this was written.

English is not the original language. In the original language it says. He rejoiced in the sons of humans. The sons of Adam. It's a plural. Sons. Of Adam.

[12:19] It's not talking about the original people. Who were sinless. It's after. They committed sin. After the world began to spiral out of control. Still. Something about humans.

As his creation. God still rejoiced. In humans. Since God was wise. In this way. He knew what he was doing.

And he delighted. In humans. Even in fallen humans. Since he was wise. In this way. Is it any wonder why Jesus. Said this.

God loved. The world. In this way. That he sent his son. So that whoever trusts him. Would not. Perish.

Or be destroyed. But would have eternal life. Jesus says. God loves the world. And sent his son. To die for sinful people. And in Proverbs.

[13:14] We read. That God. In his wisdom. Delights. In humans. As well as in his whole creation. Well that. That statement.

That Jesus makes. Leads us to the next thing. That was. There. Before creation. The first thing. Is God's wisdom. He knew what he was doing. From the very beginning. The second thing.

That was. If you could say it. There. Before creation. Was Jesus himself. Now that was a shock. To his disciples. Who looked at him. Face to face.

They knew he was a man. They could smell his sweat. They could talk to him. Eat with him. But he. Was there. Before creation. Listen to what Jesus himself says.

I'll simply read you a few statements. That Jesus says. You can write them down. If you have paper and pen. Because Jesus says some amazing things. About himself.

[14:13] In John 8. 57 to 58. Some of his. Some of the people opposing Jesus. Said. You're not yet 50 years old. He was only about 30.

You're not yet 50 years old. Some of the Jews said to him. And you have seen Abraham. Jesus had just said something. To that effect. That Abraham had seen Jesus. And delighted.

But. You're not even 50 years old. And you've seen Abraham. And Jesus says. I tell you the truth. Before Abraham was born. I am. Well they picked up stones.

To stone him. For blaspheming. Basically saying that he was God. And that's exactly what Jesus was saying. Before Abraham existed. A long time before. I am. Well that's just one statement of Jesus.

Here's another. In his prayer to his father. The night that he was betrayed. And then killed for us. Jesus prays this. John 17.

[15:12] I'll read verse 5. And verse 24. And now Father. Glorify me in your presence. With the glory. That I had with you. Before the world began.

Father. I want those you have given me. To be with me. Where I am. To see my glory. The glory that you have given me. Because you loved me. Before the creation of the world.

See. It's not just that. God was wise. At the beginning. Before creation. But Jesus was there. The very son of God.

Was there. Was glorious. And was loved by the father. His disciples heard these statements. I'm sure we're very confused.

But it began to make sense. When Jesus rose from the dead. And they realized how special. This man actually was. He really was. The son of God. God. And so his disciples. Began to make some claims.

[16:12] That were striking. Listen to some of these statements. Of Jesus' disciples. About Jesus. John. One of Jesus' closest friends. While he was on this earth.

John wrote. In John 1. 1 to 3. John says. In the beginning. In the beginning. In the beginning. Creation. In the beginning. Was the word. And the word was with God.

The word was God. He was in the beginning. With God. All things were made through him. And without him. Nothing was made. That has been made. And then he goes on to say.

This word became flesh. And dwelled with us. And we've seen his glory. John says. About Jesus. He was there. Before God created the world.

And it was in fact. Through Jesus. That God did that creation. Paul. Another disciple. A bit later. But another follower of Jesus. Says these things. In Colossians 1.

[17:10] 15 to 17. In Jesus. All things. Were created. In the heavens. And on the earth. The visible. And the invisible.

Whether thrones. Or lords. Or rulers. Or authorities. All things. Through him. And for Jesus. Were created. He is before all things.

And in Jesus. All things hold together. Again. A little later in Colossians. The same letter. Paul writes in chapter 2. Verses 2 to 3. My purpose.

Is that. The Gentiles. People like us. May be encouraged. In heart. And united in love. So that they may. Have the full riches.

Of complete understanding. In order that they may know. God's mystery. Namely. Jesus Christ. In whom. Are hidden. All the treasures.

[18:05] Of wisdom. And knowledge. It's in Jesus. That you find. God's wisdom. Jesus was there. As was wisdom. Before creation.

And it's in Jesus. That we even find. God's wisdom. If you want to know. The way God thinks. Who God is. You've got to know Jesus. And so to another group of Christians.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1. 24. To those who are called. Both Jews and Greeks. Christ. Is the power. Of God. And the wisdom.

Of God. If you want to know. God's power. If you want to know. God's wisdom. Know Christ. He was there. Before creation.

As was God's wisdom. So. Before creation. What was it like? Before. Wood. Existed. In trees. Before. The ground existed.

[19:03] That we're standing on. Before any of that. God's wisdom was there. He knew exactly what he was doing. And what he was going to do. And Jesus was personally there. By his father's side.

Glorious. And loved. And helping create. But that's not all. That's not all that was there. Before creation. And this is where we turn back to 1 Peter.

Because he uses that idea. Of before the creation of the world. What did he say. Was there. Before creation. This is where we start to. Get closer.

To our suffering. And what to do. When we or someone we love. Is suffering. 1 Peter. Chapter 1. Verse 20. Verse 20. Let's actually read. Verse 17 to 20. 17 to 21.

[20:06] 1 Peter 1. 17. Since you call on a father. Who judges each man's work. Impartially. Live your lives. As strangers here.

In reverent fear. For you know. That it was not. With perishable. Things. Such as. Silver or gold. That you were redeemed.

That you were bought back. From your empty way of life. Handed down to you. By your forefathers. But rather. You were bought back. With the precious. Blood. Of Christ.

A lamb without blemish. Or defect. He was chosen. Before the creation. Of the world. But was revealed. In these last times.

For your sake. Through him. You believe in God. Who raised him from the dead. And glorified him. And so your faith. And your hope. Are in God. So Jesus.

[21 : 03] Was chosen. Before the creation of the world. But revealed. In these last times. What does that mean exactly? This is. Even more profound.

Or I should say. This is extra. Not just that he was existing. Before creation. But he was chosen. To do something. He was chosen to do it.

Before God created anything. And then we saw it happen. We saw him do it. What was that? What was in God's mind?

As the father. The son. The spirit. Conversed. Planned. What would happen. In the world. What was Jesus. Chosen to do.

And then revealed. When the time was right. Well. It's in verse 19. Just before he says. That Jesus. Was the one chosen. What's in Peter's mind.

[22 : 02] Is how we were bought. With Jesus's precious blood. Jesus died. To pay our ransom. So that we could be with God.

God. And that. Is what he was chosen to do. Before creation. And that was how he was revealed. In Peter's present time. On the cross.

Then raising from the dead. But this has. Serious implications. For us. It's difficult to think about. But we need to. To. This draws. To our attention. The idea. The idea of suffering. Because. It was before creation.

Before anything went wrong. Before humans. Destroyed God's creation. Before God had even. Created anything good. Before that. It was planned. That Jesus. Would die.

[22 : 59] For sinners. If you could put it this way. You could think. About God.

Contemplating. What would transpire. If he. Created the world in this way. Created humans. With this. Ability. To rebel. If God.

And then God. Foreseeing. Humans. Rebelling. And. Him sending his own son. Him doing that. As God contemplates this. He hasn't made anything yet.

Why didn't he say. Whoa. Scratch that idea. I'm not going to do it that way. I mean. People are going to sin. There's going to be suffering. My own son.

I would send my own son. To buy them back. With his own blood. I'm not going to create it this way. He could have stopped. But he decided. This is the way.

[23 : 53] That I want to create the world. He created it good. But he had in mind. His own son. Dying. For sinners. That's profound. And. Difficult.

To wrestle with. But I think this helps us. As we. Think about. Our suffering. And the suffering of those. That we love. When children. Are going through pain.

Any other kind of pain. That you can think of. Those two qualities of God. That I mentioned at the beginning. That I've hinted at throughout.

We have to keep in mind. Before creation. When God was deciding. To send his own son. To help sinners. To save sinners.

God's wisdom. Was there. And God's self-sacrificial goodness. He was going to sacrifice himself. To the benefit. To the benefit. Of sinners. This does not answer.

[24 : 52] All the problems. This does not answer. All the questions. But it does mean. That whenever we are suffering. And in pain. We have a God. Who knew what he was doing. And who entered it himself.

To help us. We have a wise God. And we have a God. Who loves. Who is good. In fact. Who is self-sacrificial.

For us. I don't know a lot of things. A lot of things confuse me. A lot of simple things.

A lot of profound things. But I know that each of you. Has experienced difficult times. Some more than others. Most of us have experienced.

The death of someone that we love. We've experienced injuries. Bad health. People sinning against us. Or our loved ones.

[25 : 50] Our own sinfulness. Our own frustration with ourself. Unfair treatment. Frustrations in our bodies. In our souls. No breaks.

In this hard life. When times are difficult. When times are confusing. Painful. Even excruciating. God is wise.

To allow things to be this way. Is that an answer? Is that an answer that helps in any way? We're called to trust God.

Even when we don't have all of the answers. We're called to trust God. Who is wise and good. Even when we don't have all the answers.

We're called to trust God. We're called to trust God. We're called to trust God. We're called to trust God. Think back to coach Herb Brooks. That I mentioned with the kids. The coach of the 1980 American men's ice hockey team.

[26 : 59] I mentioned to the kids how he pushed those children. It's children. He pushed those young men. University students. Beyond their limits.

Beyond what they thought was possible. And they didn't know why. They were tired. They were in pain. They were confused. They constantly asked. Why is he doing this?

He's the one who could stop this. He's the one who could not have us do another drill. Why is he continuing to do this? It was confusing and painful and tiring for them. And I mentioned to the kids how, as the Bible says, God uses suffering to train us to build endurance and perseverance.

To make us stronger than we were before. But there's something else that I didn't tell the children. There's something else that that coach was doing with those athletes.

As I've contemplated it more, this is a helpful insight into God. A small glimpse in Coach Brooks. He hardly ever told them why he was having them do these things.

[28 : 10] He did sometimes. And that was helpful. But he often did not tell them why. He just had them do it. They wanted an answer. They kept asking, why are you pushing us this way?

And he hardly ever told them. And this in and of itself was also good training. They not only needed to have stronger muscles, which they gained through the difficult trials.

And they became stronger and more capable for that big game, for those big games. They not only needed strength in that way, but they needed to listen to him and obey him quickly and without hesitation.

Especially for those moments that would come when there would not be time to get the reason. And it would cause damage if they didn't listen and obey quickly. For example, in one of those games, he had to make a call really quick.

Tell his players to do something. And they couldn't stop and say, why? Why are you asking us to go through this, to do this? Because the moment would be over and they would have lost something valuable.

[29 : 20] He saw something that they didn't see. And they had to listen and obey quickly. Without a reason. And what had happened? What would have happened in those moments if he had trained them the whole time that he would give them an answer every time they asked for it?

They would never have learned to listen and obey immediately when it was needed. I think that in and of itself was very healthy training for those athletes. To not have answers.

But to learn to trust the one who knows better. The one who sees better. The one who has a better plan. We're called to trust God even when we don't have answers.

We're called to rely on God's character. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1.9 Because of our suffering, we felt that we had received the sentence of death.

But that was to make us rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead. Even without answers, we are called to rely on God's character.

[30 : 31] Especially as this is seen vividly in Jesus. God's wisdom and God's goodness. The Jesus who was there before all things.

Who decided to come into our messy world of pain and suffering. Who decided to bear our sin on himself in order to save us.

The Jesus who was betrayed by friends. Who was physically hurt. Emotionally stressed. Who had loved ones die. The Jesus who decided to experience all of this with us.

And then raised from the dead in order to guide us home. So even without all the answers. In suffering. Rely on God's character.

On God's wisdom. He knows what he's doing. And on his goodness. He sent his own son to rescue us. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.