

# How Suffering Transforms Us

1 Samuel 21:10-15 // Psalm 56 // Psalm 34

- I. Intro: We were made as the image of God, but that image was marred by sin
  - A. The world is constantly trying to conform you to be its image
    1. Peter says as much, *“Do not be conformed to your former way of life...”*
    2. 1 John 2:16 tells us how the world tries to conform us. It offers us...
      - a) A craving for physical pleasure
      - b) A craving for everything we see
      - c) Pride in our achievements and possessions
    3. The world wants to conform you, squish you into that mold
      - a) Desire this. Crave that. This will give you identity and purpose.
  - B. But if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, and the new has come! Now, in Christ, we are being transformed into a different image
    1. Paul explains in Romans 12:2, *“Don’t be CONFORMED to the customs and patterns of this world... instead be TRANSFORMED [into the image of Christ] by changing the way you think.”* (Bill UnAuthorized Translation)
  - C. We know how the world conforms us, as we said...
    1. Marketing, pressure, identity doubts, etc
  - D. What about Christ? Changing the way we think, but then there needs to be an opportunity to put those thoughts into reality. So, life... specifically in suffering
    1. **Suffering transforms us as we cling to what is TRUE by faith**
  - E. Consider:
    1. *Romans 5:3-4, We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation.*
    2. *James 1:2-4, When troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.*
    3. Think about what these passages (and many others) claim: **On the path to maturation, suffering is a dear friend in whom you should rejoice.**
    4. *“I want to know Christ and experience the mighty [Holy Spirit] power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, becoming like him...” Phil 3:10-11 (BUV)*
  - F. We are being transformed into Christ's image and likeness, but consider Christ → what was his shape? What is his image?
    1. One of suffering, rejection, and sorrow mingled with joy
    2. His shape was “Cruciform” → having the shape or form of a cross
    3. Cruciformity is the process of being shaped by the nature of Jesus so that our identity, character, and way of life reflect the pattern of the cross.

- G. Entering David's "Dark Night of the Soul," we see HIS cruciformity. We see David maturing through suffering.
- II. 1 Samuel 21:10–12
- A. *[10] And David rose and fled that day from Saul and went to Achish the king of Gath. [11] And the servants of Achish said to him, "Is not this David the king of the land? Did they not sing to one another of him in dances, 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands'?" [12] And David took these words to heart and was much afraid of Achish the king of Gath. After multiple failed attempts on his life, David reaches the end of his rope.*
  - B. He fled Saul via Ahimelech and now finds himself at the gates of the Philistine king → the archenemy of Israel, the home city of Goliath, the defeated giant.
  - C. The Philistines capture David, bind him, and drag him before their king
  - D. David fully expects he will be executed as a war criminal; he is their prize
  - E. It is at this point in his story that David pens Psalm 56
  - F. This is like reading David's private journal in his suffering. Matter of fact, Donald Whitney, in his *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, uses the Psalms as an argument that journaling should be considered one of the primary spiritual acts
- III. Psalm 56 → *To the choirmaster: according to The Dove on Far-off Terebinths. A Mikdam of David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath.*
- A. *1 O God, have mercy on me,  
for people are hounding me.  
My foes attack me all day long.*
  - 2 I am constantly hounded by those who slander me,  
and many are boldly attacking me.*
  - 3 But when I am afraid,  
I will put my trust in you.**
  - 4 I praise God for what he has promised.**  
*I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?  
What can mere mortals do to me?*
  - 5 They are always twisting what I say;  
they spend their days plotting to harm me.*
  - 6 They come together to spy on me—  
watching my every step, eager to kill me.*
  - 7 Don't let them get away with their wickedness;  
in your anger, O God, bring them down.*
  - 8 You keep track of all my sorrows.  
You have collected all my tears in your bottle.  
You have recorded each one in your book.**
  - 9 My enemies will retreat when I call to you for help.  
This I know: God is on my side!*
  - 10 I praise God for what he has promised;**

*yes, I praise the Lord for what he has promised.  
11 I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?  
What can mere mortals do to me?*

*12 I will fulfill my vows to you, O God,  
and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for your help.  
13 For you have rescued me from death;  
you have kept my feet from slipping.  
So now I can walk in your presence, O God,  
in your life-giving light.*

B. So what did David do, think, journal, process in the midst of his suffering?

**1. David praised God for what he promised (x3)**

- a) David says that when he is afraid, he puts his trust in God
- b) What does that mean? Specifically, it means that he trusts in God's promises → more specifically, his WORD (not guesswork)
- c) What does that imply? David KNOWS God's promises.
  - (1) Remember what we said before. We are transformed by the renewing of our minds – changing the way we think.
  - (2) FACT → FAITH → FEELING TRAIN
    - (a) When we put feelings first, we get out of whack
    - (b) David says, "I am feeling fear, so I need to go back to what God said, and put my trust in his promises"
    - (c) This gets the train back in the proper order
- d) Are you struggling? There's nothing wrong with feelings. If you just focus on your feelings, it will only get worse
  - (1) Acknowledge what you're feeling
  - (2) Remember and ponder what is true
  - (3) Put your trust in the Word of God

**2. David took comfort in the presence of God**

- a) You don't remember every tear you've shed
  - (1) When you shed it, where you shed it
  - (2) Maybe you've been mocked for your tears
  - (3) Maybe people have thrown them in your face
  - (4) Maybe you cry so much it's almost comical
- b) God remembers every tear
  - (1) He has them stored in his bottle... He's written about them in his moleskin journal. Why?
  - (2) So he can wipe away every last one, undo every hurt, and right every wrong

IV. 1 Samuel 21:13-15

*A. [13] So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. [14] Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? [15] Do I lack madmen, that you have*

*brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"*

- B. David journaled Psalm 56. He put his faith in God and his promises. Then, he pulled this wildcard... and it worked!
  - C. When he is freed, reflecting once again in his journal, he pens Psalm 34
- V. Psalm 34 → *A psalm of David, regarding the time he pretended to be insane in front of Abimelech, who sent him away.*

A. *1 I will praise the Lord at all times.*

*I will constantly speak his praises*

*2 I will boast only in the Lord;*

*let all who are helpless take heart.*

*3 Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness;*

*let us exalt his name together.*

B. **WHY?!**

*4 I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me.*

*He freed me from all my fears.*

*5 Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;*

*no shadow of shame will darken their faces.*

*6 In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened;*

*he saved me from all my troubles.*

*7 For the angel of the Lord is a guard;*

*he surrounds and defends all who fear him.*

1. Faith is a muscle → when you exercise it, it gets stronger

2. David embraced the process of trusting in God in his suffering and he was transformed

a) He experienced the comforting presence of God

b) He saw his power and salvation at work

c) Now he has all the more reason to pray the next time!

C. *8 Taste and see that the Lord is good.*

*Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!*

*9 Fear the Lord, you his godly people,*

*for those who fear him will have all they need.*

*10 Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry,*

*but those who trust in the Lord will lack no good thing.*

*11 Come, my children, and listen to me,*

*and I will teach you to fear the Lord.*

1. **SO HE INVITES THE CONGREGATION**

a) This is important b/c your suffering isn't just for you; it's for the benefit of others, as we will see in two weeks)

2. On the other side of David's tragedy, he has tasted and seen the goodness of God!

3. David has experienced the refuge of the Lord!

4. He has grown in his humility, realizing that even lions - even giant-slayers - need help!

5. Now he is ready to teach others, help others, lead others
6. David is learning, through suffering, what he needs to be a good king

## VI. Final Thoughts

- A. As we reflect on David's transformation through his dark night of the soul, we must understand how Jesus uses our sorrows to transform us.
- B. David's journey from despair to praise models the journey of cruciformity, the process of becoming more like Christ and reflecting the pattern of the cross.
- C. Jesus wants to use your suffering to transform you more into his image**
  - 1. Remember that the image of Jesus is a cruciform shape**
    - a) Just as Christ's life was marked by suffering, rejection, and sorrow mingled with joy, so are we shaped through our trials.
    - b) Cruciformity means adopting the form of the cross in our lives, allowing suffering to mold us into the image of Christ.
    - c) We have such a cultural disdain for suffering, but it is part of life!
  - 2. Let FACTS, not FEELINGS, drive you, and put your FAITH in God**
    - a) Be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
    - b) This renewal often occurs through the crucible of suffering, as we learn to think according to God's truth rather than our feelings.
    - c) David models this by trusting God's promises
      - (1) The Psalms picture this. Read them. Pray them. Live them.
  - 3. Remember Christ's presence in your suffering**
    - a) In the pain, you will experience the nearness of God
    - b) He will give grace for today, daily bread, and new mercies
    - c) Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, weeps and walks with you
  - 4. God WILL use every hurt for his glory and the church's growth**
    - a) David's invitation to the congregation in Psalm 34 to "taste and see that the Lord is good" emphasizes that our suffering and transformation are not just for us but for the benefit of others.
    - b) Our experiences of God's faithfulness in trials equip us to encourage and lead others, much like David, who learned through suffering what he needed to know to be a good king.
- D. Conclusion
  1. Nobody likes to suffer, but the dark periods of life are critical to our journey towards Christlikeness.
  2. Through suffering, we are transformed and equipped to reflect Christ's love, humility, and sacrifice to the world.
  3. Cruciformity, being shaped by the cross, means that our sorrows and trials are not wasted but are used by God to mold us into the image of His Son.
- E. Invitation for prayer