

How to Suffer for the Glory of God

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Text: 2 Samuel 16:5-13

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Series: Life of David

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Introduction: Open your Bibles to **2 Samuel 15**. The title of tonight's message is: "How to Suffer to the Glory of God". Tonight I want to show you how it is God's will for every Christian to suffer in order for each of us to be Christlike.

We come to a time in David's life where he is suffering deeply. His son Absalom has led an insurrection. In the midst of this we have a man named Shimei that curses David and throws rocks and dirt on him as he is leaving. How David reacts to this trial is a lesson for us all.

2 Samuel 16:5-13, "And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. 6 And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. 7 And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: 8 The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. 9 Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. 10 And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? 11 And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. 12 It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day. 13 And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust."

[Prayer for Guidance]

Why do we suffer? Last week we gave one answer to the question. We often suffer because of our sin. But this week, we see Shimei persecuting David seemingly for no reason. David had the power to stop this man, but chose not to. What was David's reason? Essentially, David said he believed that the LORD was in control of all things and had the power to return good to David for Shimei's cursing. God is in control!!

As we look at the terrible suffering David faced in his last year as king, and the last year of his life, we might wonder—doesn't God love David? Why would he wait until he's just about to take him to heaven to pour out all this suffering on David. Perhaps you have asked God WHY you have had to go through a severe and difficult trial.

Tonight, I want to give you some reasons why God would have all of us to suffer through sometimes unexplained difficulties, burdens, trials, and tests.

How can we go through trials and suffering for the glory of God? We have a two edged sword tonight. First we are going to see the **Reasons** for trials, and then we are going to see our what our **Response** to trials ought to be.

I. First, let's look at the **Reasons** for Trials.

A. Trials make us **Christlike**. God at times calls us to carry heavy burdens so that we might be like Christ.

Isaiah calls Christ "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (**Isaiah 53:3**). Jesus took up a cross, and we are called to do the same! There are times when God calls on us to suffer in life as Jesus suffered with difficulties and unexpected grief and sometimes hardship. Jesus said in **Matthew 16:24-26**, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" As Christians, we must take up our cross and be ready for God to use troubles and difficulties. We must not seek to have our ultimate purpose in the comforts of this life.

1. Christ learned obedience through suffering, and so should we. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (**Hebrews 5:8**). One commentator said this: "Though Christ was dear to the Father above any other, the Son in whom he was 'well pleased,' yet we see, that far from being treated with indulgence and tenderness...He was continuously afflicted while He dwelt on earth, and His whole life was nothing else than a perpetual cross".¹
2. Christ suffered so many burdens in his life so that he could be characterized as the "man of sorrows". When we are tried, we should not try to get free of the trial but we should "learn obedience" as Christ did. It is not that Christ learned obedience as if he didn't know what it was, the idea is that he "practiced" obedience.

It is easy to become self-absorbed when things are going easy. God would have us practice obedience when things are hard and impossible to bear. Why? Because God is conforming us to Christ's image (**Romans 8:29**).

- a. Paul says in Romans 8, the chapter where we learn about conformity to Christ that we are "heirs God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (**Romans 8:17**).
- b. He says, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (**2 Timothy 3:12**). Jesus himself reminds us that if we live in this world we will have sorrows and troubles and hardships.
- c. Jesus says in **John 16:33**, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world".

¹ Calvin, Book III, Chapter 8, Section 1.

d. **Acts 14:22** tells us that Paul and Barnabas went through “Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 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.”

So suffering is to be expected in the Christian life. Yet it is a comfort in any trial or trouble that God’s purpose for you is always good. He loves you. He’s conforming you to Christ! “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:28-29).

Paul went so far to say that he wanted to be like Christ in every way. He said in **Philippians 3:10**, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death”. The ESV puts it this way, “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death”. Suffering is one of God’s main tools for making us like Christ.

3. When you remember that your trials are the tool that God uses to make you like Christ, then you can see your trials as blessings. Every trial is a gift wrapped package from God to make you like Christ. **James 1:3**, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”.

Remember what David said in **Psalms 119:71**, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” When you remember that God is conforming you to the Man of Sorrows in all your trials and tribulations, your cross becomes easier and your burden becomes lighter. Still we are called to “take up our cross” and “follow Christ”. We must not be surprised that following Christ means unexplained trials and difficult trials. We learn to practice obedience and walk as He walked when these trials come.

4. When you come right down to it, without trials, we could not be **happy** in Christ. Trials and hardships actually work to increase our happiness. Let me explain.
 - a. Paul says in **Romans 5:3**, “And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” In other words, Paul says, I have pleasure in life’s hardships because they make me conformed to Christ and long for heaven!
 - b. **2 Corinthians 12:9**, “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

What brings us happiness is not the things of this world, but the love of God in our hearts when we hope for heaven in trials, and the power of Christ resting upon us in trials. It is in trials that we realize our only happiness is in Christ. All the treasures of this world dim when we suffer. They cannot satisfy us. In trials we rest in Christ alone. This is where true happiness comes from, so we should not shrink back from hardships.

B. Trials make us **Contrite** and humble. Often when things go well for us, we get an inflated view of ourselves. We begin to trust in ourselves or in money or in other people. Trials help to remind us that we are frail. **Genesis 3:19** tells us that out of the ground “wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”.

1. We need trials to humble us, because often we become **self-reliant**, and so God must show us our frailty. We are frail, and we need trials to help remind us that it is only God’s strength by which we have any power at all. We need to take up our cross in many sufferings throughout life because we are naturally proud and self-reliant creatures. We need to be humbled often through trials.

- He may send a car repair or a bill that you are unable to pay.
- He may send you a Shimei that accuses you wrongly.
- He may send you much weakness, sickness or pain.

These kinds of trials push away our confidence in our flesh. Trials uncover our fail humanity. We are dust. Peter says “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away” (1 Peter 1:24).

According to Daniel 5:23, our breath is in God’s hand, and all our ways are determined by Him. We must not have confidence in our own strength.

Trials strip us of self-reliance and confidence in our flesh. In trials, our knees buckle under, and we cry out to Him. It is in this state of mind that we are closest to God. It is when we are weakest that we are abiding most completely in Christ. Trials rob us of our confidence in the flesh and push us to take refuge in the grace and tenderness of God.

What do we have to boast about? We have no reason to trust in any of our gifts or abilities. All that we are and have is a gift of God. “In Him we live and move and have our being.” The only thing that makes us any stronger than any one else is the grace of Christ. We have nothing to boast of in ourselves. **1 Corinthians 4:7**, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

2. We need trials to humble us, because often we try **feed our souls on vain things**. God sends trials so that we will learn to feed on Him. Our souls can become empty if we are filling our heart and mind with news, sports, and entertainment. We cannot go very far in those things because God will send us a wake up call. He wants us to eat at His table, not with the world. TV, radio, media, entertainment and the like cannot satisfy our hungry souls. They are simply a distraction from our pain. Only God can bring us wholeness.

3. We need trials to humble us, because often we become **uncompassionate** and selfish. God sends trials so that we will empathize with people and learn to help them in their trials. We read in **2 Corinthians 1:4** that God “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.” It is after a difficult trial that we can understand the pain of others, and God makes us more loving and compassionate like Christ.

4. We need trials to humble us, up because we often **trust in riches**. Look at **Psalm 30:6-7**, "And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved [NEVER VISITED BY CALAMITY OR TRIAL]. 7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." David thought because he had enough money that he would never be "moved" or overcome by the hardships of this life. We often trust in our own prosperity—our job, our bank account, the food we have in our refrigerator.

C. Trials make us **Cry out** for Christ's coming. We ought always be discontent in this world as believers. This world is not our home, we are just a passing through. We are citizens of another country. **Philippians 3:20**, "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ".

When we are in trials, we cry out to the Lord "Come quickly, Lord Jesus" (**Revelation 22:20**).

- **Romans 12:12**, Paul says we are to be "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer".

II. Our **Response** to trials. TRUST!!

A. First, in trials, we should be **Thankful**.

- **Philippians 4:6**, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."
- **James 1:3**, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience".
- **Philippians 4:4**, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice".
- **1 Peter 4:12-13**, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: 13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."

B. Second, in trials, we be **Resting** unreservedly in the Lord. T-R-U-S-T!! Thankful, Resting Unreservedly, Surrendered, Transformed to Christ's image

1. Don't allow your thoughts to wander. Instead trust in the Lord. **Isaiah 26:3-4**, "Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength".

Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. 6 In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths".

2. **Psalm 56:3**, "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee".

3. We should not attempt to carry the burden, but to **cast** it on the Lord. **Psalm 55:22**, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved". **1 Peter 5:7**, "Casting all your care

upon him; for he careth for you". He loves you with an everlasting love. He does not want you to suffer needlessly. He gives us burdens to teach us God-dependence in our life.

4. Don't trust in man, but in the LORD! **Jeremiah 17:5**, "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD". **Proverbs 29:25**, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe".
- C. Finally, in trials, we should be **Surrendered** to God's sovereign plan to conform us to Christ. When our Lord faced the cross and all its ugliness, he prayed a prayer of total surrender. He said in **Luke 22:42**, "not my will, but thine, be done". In our frailty and weakness, not of us would choose trials.
- D. We should seek to be **Transformed** into the image of Christ through God's Word. **2 Corinthians 3:18**, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:28-29).

In order to trust God, we must stop trusting in ourselves, in our riches, in other people who might bail us out. Total trust ought to be our response to trials.