

TRANSFORMED: THE TRIALS OF LIFE

Feb 12, 2017 | Pastor Keith "PK" Jenkins

I'm sure many of us truly want to be transformed into the image of Christ. But I'm also sure that we would prefer to have God use a different method than trials...but no one can argue that it is a very effective way to be transformed.

"It's not if you'll go through, it's when you go through"

The believers of that time I'm sure were excited to receive a letter from James, the brother of Jesus. He starts his letter with:

James 1: 1-4 "Greetings! Dear brothers and sisters, 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**".

"This message might not be what they wanted to hear but it is what they needed to hear"

In the original language it is a picture of fire that causes the "dross" to be separated, a process of refining by fire.

It is during these difficult times that we learn and see God in a new and fresh way.

Pastor Keith expressed a concern how we as believers are so easily moved away from our faith. We need to have staying power even when we're hit hard, showing the ability to absorb the hit and bounce back.

1. It's Not a Strange Thing! (Peter & Jesus)

1 Peter 4:12 "Dear friends, don't be shocked or surprised when you suffer through painful tests and trials as if something strange is happening to you"

John 16:33 "In this world YOU WILL experience difficulties! But take heart! **I have conquered the world! I've told you this SO THAT TRUSTING ME, YOU WILL BE UNSHAKABLE and DEEPLY AT PEACE**"

Don't buy into the theology that we will not suffer and face trials. The 1st century church believers expected to suffer trials and Jesus told us we would. But the end result that God desires is that we be "unshakable".

2. Our Faith Is Authenticated in The Midst of Trials

"You don't know what you believe until its authenticated"

Job 1:9-11 Satan replied, "Would Job worship you if he got nothing out of it? You have always protected him and his family and everything he owns. You bless everything he does, and you have given him enough cattle to fill the whole country. But now suppose you take away everything he has—he will curse you to your face!"

Satan asked a very important question that we need to answer. What if we "got nothing out of it"? Will we still worship and bless God despite great loss like Job?

It's the same as in a marriage, it was easy to say your vows but they will be authenticated as you go through the years. Look how Job responded to this terrible trial:

"At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship" (Job 1:20)

Also see verse 21-22:

"and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." In all this, **Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing**".

"God never has to prove his love to me, he's already done that at the cross"

"Clarity and perspective comes in hindsight" But in the midst of the trial it's confusing and hurtful. Really this is the only way we can come along side others in difficulty and say with understanding; "he is faithful", "he is my provider", etc. Job worshipped in the midst of despair!

"The unanswered prayer is actually God's goodness"

3. Trials reveal your foundations! (What/who is your life REALLY built on?)

Matthew 7:24-27 "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

It's about "hearing and building", developing a foundation. If you wait to build in the middle of the storm it's too late.

God takes us to our limit and then you go a little further...that's what trials do.

Some questions are unanswerable, "when God is silent, maybe we should be too". In that moment we worship and cry at the same time.

4. God REVEALS himself to me in my trials

A believer that was involved in an accident and had been paralyzed from the waist down went through what all humans would go through. After a time, he said this; "I now see God from my chair (wheelchair) clearer than I could before on my feet".

"I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:10)

To the early church it was a "badge of honor" to suffer for Jesus, in a lot of the church today we conclude that something is wrong.

Trials help us re-prioritize our lives, our focus, our foundation has to be Christ Jesus...then things like politics and other things do not divide us.

Be assured that he knows what you need to get through this trial. He is very aware that we need his grace to walk through these difficult times and suffering. He has not abandoned you no matter what you feel, what others say, he will never leave us alone.

We need to be encouraged and encourage one another...God is good... "though he slay me".

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Although it may not be something we look forward to, we know that trials will produce Christ's transformation and image in us. What is your initial reaction to the subject of trials in our lives?
2. After reading our text, James 1:1-4 on page one of our notes, what does this quote speak to you: "This message might not be what they wanted to hear but it is what they needed to hear"
3. In the opening verses James, Peter and John tell us: "It's Not a Strange Thing"! when we face trials and suffering. What are your thoughts?
4. Take another look at pages 2 & 3 of your notes and discuss what Pastor Keith spoke about in: "Our Faith Is Authenticated in The Midst of Trials"
5. "Trials reveal your foundations"! (What/who is your life REALLY built on?) How do we know what our foundation is, what our lives are really built on? How do we build our lives on him?
6. What a wonderful truth: "God REVEALS himself to me in my trials". What does Philippians 3:10 tell us about this statement?
7. Lastly, how did the early church view trials and suffering versus many in the church today? In the midst of God's image being worked in us, how should we treat one another?