

(Apostolic Vision) Faith's Response to Suffering

by Dale Heisey

The sermon explores how faith can guide us through suffering by understanding God's purpose and responding with humility and prayer.

Duration: 1:00:46

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Matthew 6:33, John 15:1-2, 1 Corinthians 11:32, Hebrews 12:5-11

Topics: "Suffering And Faith", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for individuals to allow God to break them and submit to His will. He questions how long people will resist God's will, defend themselves, and blame others. The preacher highlights the importance of humbling oneself before God and seeking His guidance in all circumstances. He also discusses the concept of trials and challenges as tools used by God to shape individuals and bring them closer to His image. The sermon encourages believers to trust in God's love and to seek His perspective in their lives.

Transcript

This evening I want to greet you in Jesus' name, it's a blessing to see all of you here. And I just have one concern or one thought in my heart tonight, as it is my responsibility to stand here. I have one desire, that someone in this assembly will receive help in your life because you came here tonight.

And if that doesn't happen, then we have not accomplished our purpose. I don't want this service tonight to be an intellectual exercise, I don't want it to be a stretching of your doctrinal muscles necessarily. But I want this service to touch your heart.

And if that sounds pietistic, then that's exactly what needs to happen. So we want to see someone's needs met tonight in this service. Now the brother led us in two hymns from a book there in front of you that he called the Life Songs.

I'd like you to take that same book and open it to 136. And since I do not know this congregation and I do not know you brethren here in Oregon, I don't know if you sing this song or not. I don't know if you know this hymn.

Do you know it brother Jason? This is a very meaningful hymn, we memorized this song many years ago. And we don't have this song in the Spanish language. And it's a joy to sing it when it's available in a congregation that has this book.

I think we're going to sing this song tonight and you might just want to observe that down there in the chorus, in the refrain, that last score and a half is sung only after the last stanza. And this message is extremely important. Pray brethren, pray the sound of an hourglass.

And you have the sand going down through this hourglass as we're sitting here in this service. And before this service is over, all the sand that's in the top of the glass will be at the bottom. And when you turn that hourglass over, that much of your life will never come back again.

That was gone. And how many more days are we going to wait to have the needs met in our hearts? How many more days are we going to wait to allow God to humble us? Allow God to break us? How many more days will we resist His will? How many more days will we defend ourselves? How many more days will we preserve ourselves? How many more days will we blame somebody else? How many more days will we point the finger? How many more days will we wait to fall and humble ourselves before God? How much longer will we wait? And then he says, praise, brethren, praise. The skies are ending.

Watch, brethren, watch, the years are dying. Old time is flying. Look, brethren, look, the day is breaking.

If there's parting breath, and we don't know how far away from us parting breath is, the years are dying. We don't know how many more years we'll die. The sands are falling.

We don't know how much more sand will fall. But we have needs in our hearts tonight. And we ask you to meet our needs tonight because today is the day of salvation.

And there's no promise of tomorrow. If amen, we'll hear your voice, let him not harden his heart. Dear God, I pray that you speak to us tonight, speak to our hearts tonight, and ask you, dear God, to meet needs in this congregation tonight.

And we ask this, dear God, in the name of Jesus. Amen. You may be seated.

I realize that you do not know Maximo. But Maximo was a wayward man. Maximo had a wife and young daughter.

Maximo did not live for the Lord. God, Maximo was not saved. Maximo was not a Christian.

And we prayed for Maximo. Six o'clock, Monday afternoons, in our meeting house, we had prayer meetings. And almost every night, every week on a Monday night, Maximo's name was one of the first names given as a prayer request for several years.

I think we prayed for Maximo for about five years. During that period of time, he experienced many, many difficult things. He had a daughter three years old who developed some very, very serious perverse habits.

And he and his wife did not know what to do with this daughter, so young and already so perverted. His wife was then hospitalized after a while with an unknown cause. They didn't know what the problem was and really were not able to help her.

But she was suffering. One night, he called me to their home. And he had previously told me to never enter their property.

He told me once to never come to their place. And I obeyed that. I did not go.

But I did not stop praying. And this particular night, he called me and asked me if it would be possible for me to come to their house. So I got to their house.

He opened the door and he said, she's in there in the bed. I went to the bed and found a very, very sick wife lying there. She could hardly talk.

And I invited him to come into the room. And there we shared together what we could. We shared from the Lord of God.

We prayed together. Maximo heard this prayer. And he was a broiler grower.

And his broilers developed a serious disease. And he did not know what to do with his broilers. He called me on the phone.

He said, Eugenio, I don't know what to do with these broilers. And I went to see his broilers. I gave him a little bit of medicine.

But I told the Lord to heal those broilers. And in 24 hours, he called me and said the broilers were all well. I said, I'm glad to hear that, Maximo.

And then his wife was hospitalized again, this time with a mummified fetus. And all the while, we're praying for Maximo. Praying for Maximo.

And then he, through a series of circumstances, he lost his broiler contract. And lost his way of earning an income. And at last, Maximo, a broken man, fell beside his bed.

And asked the Lord to heal his sin-sick heart. And forgive him of his sins. He turned his life over to the Lord.

And God saved him. The title of the message tonight is Faith's Response to Suffering. I know that's a strange subject for a revival meeting.

It's not what you came to hear, probably. But where is God when we suffer? Why does he allow tragic circumstances in our lives? Why does he allow such serious struggles in congregational life? Such deep hurts and personal losses. Why does God allow that? Why do some congregations face one trial after another? While others seem to go on in their stately order with seemingly little difficulty.

And whenever a congregation has difficulties, the tendency is for other congregations to kind of step back about two or three steps. Stick out the chest just about three quarters of an inch further than normal. Raise the head and point towards that spot on the globe and say, they've got troubles over there.

And it's not very comfortable to be part of a congregation that has struggles. I know very well how that is. I mean, I've seen serious congregational struggles.

Some families face seemingly insurmountable problems. Why is that? And the Bible uses the illustration of a refiner sitting beside the fire purifying the silver. And that is a symbol of what God can be doing to us

when we are facing suffering.

That's not all that's involved in suffering. That can be involved in suffering. But this evening I want to use a different illustration.

And I think it is correct to say that the Bible also uses this illustration in a somewhat different way than I will use it tonight. But I would like to take you before a mound of precious stone. Hard stone.

Solid stone. And I'd like to see you watch this stone as a man who is well trained steps up to that course into that rock. And he has two tools in his hand.

He has a hammer and a chisel. He walks up to this big stone and he looks at it and studies it. And he sees nothing but this hunk of rock there.

But in his heart and his mind he sees something else. And with what he sees in his heart he begins making the first chips on that pile of rock. And that is what God is doing to you.

That is what God is doing in your personal life. That is what God is doing in your family. That is what God is doing in your congregation.

There's something that he wants to do. There's a goal that he has in mind. And he is extremely patient about what he is doing.

And for every piece that falls off the face of that stone and down onto the ground, for every piece that falls off, the sculptor is one piece closer to finishing his task. And there's a whole lot more to fall off yet. There's just stuff on there that does not bring out the image.

There's just material in there that is still obstructing the finished product. And that tube must come out of there. That crease, that niche, that corner must come off.

And with precision he knows how to chip. He knows what to hit. He knows what to take off.

And faith responds to suffering by understanding that that is what God is doing. And faith does more than feel the effects of a chisel. Faith sees the heart and mind and love of God that is working the hammer and chisel.

And if faith is not involved in our suffering, we only feel the pain. We only sense the pieces falling off. We only see the branches being trimmed from the vine and piling up on the floor under what used to be our lofty branches.

But faith sees more than that. Faith sees the hand that's doing it and the heart that's moving the hand. Faith sees God at work.

I want to speak tonight about faith's response to suffering. And so maybe I could make this just a bit clearer yet by telling you that I want to help us to see tonight the reason for this extenuating and sometimes painful suffering that we experience and try to point us this evening to the way that faith responds to these difficult circumstances. I'd like to begin with a very, very well-known passage of Scripture.

We've already referred to it this week in 2 Chronicles 7. I'd like to read here verses 11 to 14. To help us understand what God is doing, what God is allowing, what God has in mind as we are suffering. And your suffering might be different from mine and as a congregation different from what our congregation is facing.

But I'd just like to help us think tonight that we are the workmanship of God. And He has His image in mind. And He's trying to make His image in us.

And He is not there yet. He is not finished yet. He is working on that.

And getting that done requires a lot of suffering. But we're in 2 Chronicles 7 and you know verse 14 very well. But you cannot understand verse 14 the way it is intended to be understood unless you understand why verse 14 is in your Bible.

Verse 14 is not just an isolated little island of thought or a little isolated truth that was stuck someplace on a page in the Old Testament that preachers can use during revival meetings. But it was the answer. It was the answer that God gave to a problem.

And we get into reading about this in verse 11. Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's house, and all that came into Solomon's heart should make in the house of the Lord, and in his own house he prosperously effected. And the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and have chosen this place to myself for a house of sacrifice.

If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, or if I give your three-year-old daughter, allow your three-year-old daughter to have a paralyzingly bad habit at such an early age, or your wife needs to be hospitalized for some unknown cause, or she is so sick in her bed that she cannot speak, or the disease begins to destroy your flock, or your infant child that you were so happy was going to, after five years, be born into your home, dies within the womb, and if you lose your occupation and your opportunity to earn a living, and all these things happen, then there is a reason for it. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people, and we could just take that verse and add all kinds of things that are happening to us, all kinds of things that we are experiencing in our lives, all kinds of things that we would never choose to experience for another moment, all kinds of things that we would change overnight if we had the opportunity to do it. We would change these things if we could, and we could make a long list tonight, and everyone here would have a different list of the things that we are experiencing congregationally.

Difficult things over the years. Trials and struggles. And you feel like you live inside a transparent cage, and all the rest of the people in the constituency are looking at you.

You feel like every other tongue is wagging about you. You feel like all the fingers are pointing at you. And you feel alone, and you feel ashamed, and you wonder if anyone understands.

And when these conditions exist, now verse 14 makes sense. If this would happen, these conditions come, these difficulties begin to take place. Faith responds like this.

If my people which are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, who will forgive their sin, and will heal their hearts, heal their homes, heal their congregations, and heal their land. Now, this is a rather startling observation.

In my lifetime, I don't believe I have ever seen... Now, are you ready? Are you holding on? Do you have your seatbelt fastened, your seats in the upright position, your trade table stowed away? Are you ready? Are you listening? In my lifetime, I don't think I've ever seen verse 14 obeyed one time.

I don't think I've ever heard of a congregation, I don't think I've ever heard of a denomination, that called the whole group together, and said we're not going to leave this place until we have verse 14 of 2 Chronicles 7 completely obeyed. We're all going to gather together, and we're going to humble ourselves before the Lord, and we're going to pray together. And we're going to seek His face, and we're going to turn from wicked ways.

And before you can turn from your wicked ways, you must confess your wicked ways. Have you ever heard of a congregation that called a meeting, and they said, does anyone see what our problem is here? Can anyone call to our attention? Can someone bring this out? And someone said, yes, we have congregational pride over here. Yes, we treat our brothers so and so in a wrong way, and we're probably going to suffer for that unless we repent of it.

And someone brings out another issue, and someone brings up another subject, and the brethren say, yes, it's true. I was feeling the same way, and God is displeased. And we bring that all before God.

We bring that before Him. And we humble ourselves, and we confess that. And when we do that, God hears from Heaven, and forgives the sin, and opens the door for healing, for otherwise there was no healing.

We do that as families. We do that as husbands and wives. We need to do that as pastors.

We need to do that as individuals. And I have needed to do that. And we have needed to do this.

And this is not just some special little memory verse in here. This is the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, the brothers say. And this verse has power in it.

These words are inspired by God. This is the breath of the Holy Spirit. This is not letter.

This is spirit and light. But we must obey it, or it does us no good. We must do it.

For it's the only way to healing. It's the only way to blessing. The Gospel of John chapter 15, verse 1. I am the true vine, and I understand that that literally is, I am the vine, the true.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch of me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean to the word, which I have spoken unto you. Would you turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, verse 32. But when ye are judged, but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Faith responds to suffering. When we are chastened, when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. And we understand that.

We believe that. We read those words, and we believe that. We say yes, Lord.

We say yes to His will. We say yes to what He is doing. We don't resist what He is doing.

We say, I understand, Lord, what You are doing. I don't understand all of Your purposes. No, but I know that You see something in my life that You want changed, that You want to perfect.

You see a part of Your image that is still distorted. You are still working on that. Go ahead, Father.

Choose what tool You need. Pick up the right tool. Pick up the right chisel.

The one with the right weight. The one with the right kind of blade. The one with the right kind of point.

Pick up the right tool. Go ahead. I give You that right.

I wait. I will endure it. I will not resist You.

I see what You are doing. You may do it, Father. Hebrews chapter 12.

We start here in verse 5 and read through verse 11. I want to just pause to underline one word in verse 7 as we go through this reading and pause to underline one word in verse 11. And then we want to talk about those words.

But now let me read verses 5 through 11. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as sons of children My son despised not the chastening of the Lord, nor fainted when thou rebukest of him. For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? The word I want you to notice here is the word endure. Endure chastening.

Verse 8 says, But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all our takers then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, as we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father's Spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

As the brother has read to us tonight. Now no chastening for the presence seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceful fruits of righteousness.

Now, I want you to notice that this afterward does not apply to everybody. This nevertheless afterward is limited. This nevertheless afterward does not apply to all people who suffer.

It does not apply to all people who are under difficult circumstances and under great hurts and losses. For let us see what this verse says. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

And the word I want there is exercised. I want us to track to verse 7 of that word endure. Endure chastening.

Endure there means to abide under. To bear up courageously under suffering. To bear up courageously.

To abide under that. That is, you're not restless and trying to get away. You're abiding there.

You're not struggling and trying to get out of it. You're not saying, I will not put up with this anymore. You're not saying, I'm going to get out of here.

You're not saying, I'm going to free myself of this. You're not saying, I've had as much of this as I can take. What would happen to the stone if the stone says, I've had as much of this as I can take? It must abide there.

That chisel must keep coming and forming and chipping and perfecting this work of art so that the image can take place. And which image is he putting on that? Let me ask you, whose image is he making on that? It is the image of God. To be made in His image is the whole purpose of this.

That is the reason why you suffer. That is the reason why you're going through these difficult circumstances. That is the reason why you feel so pressed down and so alone.

That's why you feel so much like a failure. That's why you feel so much loss. That's why you feel this all happening to you.

But you endure it. You abide there and bear up courageously. That's how faith responds to suffering.

And I know that in the flesh you cannot do that. You can't do that in the flesh. This is spiritual work.

This is a spiritual exercise. Now let's look at verse 11. Nevertheless, afterward, see, in the beginning, at the present, it doesn't seem to be joyous.

It's grievous. It is not pleasant at all. Chastening is not pleasant.

I have been through very difficult circumstances. It is not pleasant to go through that. I am still going through it.

We're not finished with our suffering. And so he admits to us that it's not joyous, it's grievous. But notice the rest of the verse.

Nevertheless, afterward, it yields us a peaceful fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. I want to look at the word exercised. The word exercised here is takes us into a gymnasium.

It takes us into a sports arena. Now I realize that conservative Mennonites aren't supposed to know anything about sports. But some of us know something about sports.

Know what it's like to be under the work of a trainer. Of a captain. Of a coach.

And so you're in this arena. You're in this gymnasium. And the exercise, and the exercise, and the exercise has one purpose.

And this thing is intense. This thing is hot. This thing is difficult.

This thing is, is extenuating. This thing is stretching. This thing is all that you can do.

This is all that you can produce. There are three floors. And there are two flights of stairs for each floor.

And so you have six flights of stairs up, and six flights down. And so you go to that bottom floor and run to the top. And run to the bottom.

And run to the top. and run to the bottom, and run to the top, and run to the bottom, as fast as you can get to the top, as fast as you can get to the bottom. And you don't stop because there's 20 people behind you,

and there's about 5 people in front of you.

You're not going to stop, because the person behind you is not stopping, and you're not going to stop. You have to keep on going, and you go up and you go down, and someone is marching to that, moving to do that, and you're in this exercise. And the person who experiences this peaceful fruit is the one who allows that exercise.

You know, when you wrestle 127 pounds in class, and 26 hours before the match you weigh 137 pounds, you have 10 pounds to lose in 26 hours. And you go to Walmart and buy a special diet, and that won't take care of 10 pounds in 26 hours. And if you want to get rid of 10 pounds in 26 hours, someone is going to be exercising thereby.

And I know what that's like. I've had that happen to me. And you put sweat clothing on, and you go into a shower, turn the hot water on, fill that place with steam, and run in place as fast as you can run.

In fact, I'll get rid of about 2 or 3 pounds. And you eat a cracker and spit out the juice, and that'll get rid of a little bit more. And keep working, and keep running, and keep struggling, and keep trying, and keep exercising until 10 pounds are gone, and 26 hours later, 127.

God is doing that to us. God is watching. And the coach is looking at that person developing.

He's looking at his hips developing. He's looking at that physique developing. He's looking at that stamina developing.

He's looking at his lungs developing. He's looking at that resistance developing. He's looking at that reflex developing.

And he says, I think they're soon ready. That's the picture we have here. That's the picture.

To those who exercise thereby, and if I'm fighting it, and running from it, and refusing to experience it, refusing to be exercised, refusing to be perfected, refusing to be helped, refusing to be improved, refusing to be strengthened, I can't bring forth this fruit. And I cannot experience what faith should experience as a result of my suffering. Revelation chapter 3. I don't know what you're experiencing tonight.

Verse 19 says, As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent. The response of faith to suffering.

Be zealous, therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and suffer with him and he with me.

And notice the result. It's overcoming. To him that overcomes.

That's the purpose of the whole thing. God wants us to overcome. And he wants us to overcome in his image.

He wants us to overcome in his strength. He wants us to overcome with his faith. He wants us to overcome for his honor and glory.

He wants us to overcome for his name's sake. That's what he wants us to do. Now I just have a couple of questions I want to ask you tonight.

And see if we can find some answers to these questions. Question number one. Why do we experience so many hurts and sufferings and painful circumstances in our lives? As we look at the verses that I just read to you, we find out that one of the reasons is that we would be more fruitful.

God does not deal with his unfruitful branches. He cuts them off and they're carried away. A branch that cannot produce fruit, there it goes.

He doesn't deal with that. It's cut off, carried to the fire, it's burned. That's the end of it.

But that fruitful branch is trimmed and worked. And God knows which one can be improved and he's working on that. And God sees the value in your life.

And God sees the value in your congregation. And God sees the value in your family. And if your family is struggling, if your congregation is going through some serious difficulties, if your life is under great weight and pain tonight, God is aware of who you are and what you can do for him.

What you can be for him. And he's working on that area. He wants more fruitfulness in you.

He is not ashamed of you. He is not afraid of you. He loves you.

He says, here is an opportunity. He has choice material here. He says, I've got to work at this until it's finished.

As long as you abide there. As long as you're willing to be exercised there. He's going to keep on doing it to you.

I know this is too early in the week to ask you this question. And it may have been too early in the week to bring this message. But I want to ask you something.

Have you ever honestly got on your knees before God? Have you ever honestly got on your knees before God and said, Dear Lord, I sense. I sense that it's not here. I sense that I am not what I should be.

I sense harshness. I sense impatience. I sense impure thoughts.

I sense a wrong direction. I sense selfishness. I sense a wrong attitude towards my wife.

I sense pridefulness. I sense a feeling of self-satisfaction and self-achievement in my life. I feel the subtle mischief of self-security.

I feel the subtle mischief of we've got it all put together. I sense, dear Father, that I'm not dependent. I sense, dear God, that I'm not your child at all to be.

I sense that I'm not living in the vine. I sense that I don't have new wine in this vessel. I sense, dear God, that the Spirit of the Lord is not using me as it should.

And I'm not quite sure why. But, dear Father, I grant you the right to do anything in my life necessary to change it. Did you ever pray that prayer? If you have not prayed that prayer, God is still waiting for the invitation.

And maybe the reason why some of you in your congregations are struggling so much on a congregational level. Maybe some of you are struggling on a personal level. Maybe the reason why the

suffering is so intense is because either you or someone in your congregation has prayed that prayer.

And God is going to work. God is doing His part. And that is the most holy thing that can happen to you.

And sometimes that suffering is because God needs a trophy of His grace. A trophy of His glory. As He had in the person of Job.

As He had in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He suffered. And when He suffered, He threatened not.

And when He was reviled, He reviled not again. And He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. And He endured the suffering.

And He was exercised thereby. And He was pure gold. And one day a centurion smote himself on the breast and bowed his head and said, This surely was the Son of God.

And you can suffer with that kind of attitude and suffer in that kind of silence and suffer in that kind of resignation to God. Someone is going to bow their heads and say, I see the image of God over there. And sinners are withdrawn to the image of God.

Sinners are withdrawn to the image of God. Why do you suffer? Why do you experience so much pain and difficulty? Because suffering is the only way that God can use to increase your capacity to love. To increase your capacity to understand others.

To increase your capacity to truly be a servant. You can serve without love, but you cannot be a servant without love. Suffering is the way that we increase the capacity.

We go deeper and we go higher. We understand the depths of the mysteries of God. We can't understand it without suffering.

Suffering is that which increases the capacity of the heart. The heart is enlarged by suffering. The capacity to love and to receive and to bear and to live by faith.

Look at the muscles, the arm, the strength of God. Look at what God is doing in your life. Look at the chisel, the tools in his hand.

Do not resist. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. And when he is finished, here is what he will do.

That mighty hand will lift you up. And he will say, This is what I had in mind. And there is enduring before that moment.

And there is exercising before that moment. And there is patient waiting and patient bearing before that moment. And faith must work before that will happen.

Suffering gives us an opportunity to stop and examine our lives and examine our own experience. And see just why is this coming. Dear God, I ask you to take this harshness out of me.

I ask you to get this self-satisfaction out of me. I ask you to take this self-confidence out of me. I ask you, Father, to increase my love and joy for others.

I want to be able to weep when others weep. I want to be able to be cheerful and joyful and rejoice when others are rejoicing. And I don't have that capacity, Father.

I just kind of a cold old fellow. I just got a heart. I don't know why.

I just can't feel the way others are feeling. I just can't. Lord, work with me when suffering comes.

And God wants us to see what causes that hardness. What is causing that resistance. What is that area in our lives that should be repented of.

God wants us to see it congregationally. As families. And as brothers and sisters.

God wants to humble us. God wants to completely free us from self-life and self-love. And God wants to break us.

You know, after all, what is the will of God? After all, just what is the will of God? And it says in 1 Timothy, 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, what that is. For this is the will of God. Even your sanctification.

And God's going to keep at this thing until he reaches that. Now may I say something to you that might take you a while to consider. Maybe I will need to say it more than once.

So that you catch the significance of what I'm going to say. But that experience which even now is so sorely crushing you. That experience which even now is so sorely crushing you.

Is the best shaped tool in the hand of a loving Father. To form you into his holy image. That experience was God designed.

When he picks up a tool and goes to work on his children. He chooses a choice tool. He chooses the best shaped chisel.

He chooses one that's best fit. He chooses one that was best prepared. And that experience that you're facing that is so difficult for you.

And you would so much wish to be free from it. You would so much wish to flee from it. And you would so much wish to have not one more minute of it.

Is the tool that God has chosen. The best shaped tool in the hand of a loving Father. To form his image in your life.

And if we could believe that. We would experience blessings without hearing one more truth. If we could believe that that is true.

That our heavenly Father loves us. He is even now at work. With this very embarrassing moment.

With this very painful circumstance. He is working in my life. Lord show me what you see.

Lord tell me what you are doing. Lord bring it to my attention. Lord help me to see what you see.

Lord if I'm not able to see it. Bring some brother to call to my attention. Help me to see what you see.

How should we respond to tasting? Another question. What did Hebrews say? Chapter 12. The trainer is in that sports arena.

The coach. Trying to develop that player. Develop that person.

Who is in that training. Who is in that exercise. And I know what that is like.

I was working in a laboratory. It was kind of a scientific assignment. And I suppose I didn't have enough preparation for it.

Not enough training for it. I was doing the best job I could in that laboratory. One day when I got to work about 7 or 7 o'clock in the morning.

A scientist with his long white coat on. Came into the room where I was working. And said.

Now Dale. I'd like a few minutes of your time this morning. He walked over to this machinery.

And these dials. And these gauges. And these levers.

And said I want you to watch carefully what I'm doing. And he went through all these procedures. He said Dale you've been doing this.

But do it like this. And over here. At this stage you're making this mistake.

I want you to do it this way. Look at how I'm doing this. And I was getting smaller and smaller.

Every mistake of mine he was calling my attention. I'm just getting smaller and smaller and smaller. And you can feel the heat rising, you know.

And you feel the perspiration. You kind of wish you could evaporate or disappear. Or there would be a fire alarm.

Or you could get out of there somehow or another. You just kind of wish you could get out of this place. And he's still working on you there.

And now two hours are going by. And he's still working this thing. And finally he was done.

He looked at me and he said. So Dale I've been watching you for several months. Here in our plant.

And if I would not have thought you were worth it to take this time. And explain these things to you I never would have done it. But I saw some possibilities in you.

And I hope this is encouraging to you. So I tried to be still and accept that. Two weeks later the president of the company came to the laboratory where I was working.

Said Dale we don't want you to work in our laboratory anymore. We have an empty desk up in the front office. And we need you to come up there and take over our management position.

We want you up here with us. Come over here and take this position. If you allow God to exercise your heart to perfection to holiness.

If you allow God to shape you and direct you and perfect you. If you allow God to take those harsh and cold and selfish attitudes out of your life. If you allow God to take that self-vindication and accusations towards others.

That self-pitying spirit. If you allow him to get that out of there. I will tell you surely that he has worked for you in the front office.

And that is the reason why God is allowing you to suffer. And you have a problem with that because you look around and you compare yourself with others. You say he's not suffering like I am.

He's never had this experience like I did. He's never gone through that thing. She never has had this experience.

Their congregation has never been through these things. Their family never had these financial hardships. They never had these reverses and these losses and these fracasos that we have.

They don't ever go through that. God's working on you dear brother and sister. God loves you.

God is interested in you. God needs you. God wants you to not resist and not fight.

God wants you to abide and be patient and wait and expect. And yield yourself to him until his work is done. That is your job to do.

You know the tendency is to feel the chisel. The tendency is to see the loss. The tendency is to hear what the people are saying about us.

The tendency is to listen to the criticism. The tendency is to review the play on fast forward, the gossip that we're hearing about ourselves. The tendency is to review all that we're suffering, all that we're going through.

The losses and the diseases and the illnesses. But it's far far more for us to evaluate our response to what's going on. Am I patient? Is God in this? Do I still love him? Am I resisting him? Will I allow him to finish this? What is peace in the heart? Peace is perfect serenity.

Perfect quietness. That is, look at your heart. And turn your heart into a lake.

Cut your heart in half and fill it half full with water. And look into your heart. And peace is when that water is so quiet.

You can look into there and see your face and comb your hair. And the stillness of that water. There's no resistance or fight or flurry.

Perfectly resigned to the will of God. That sitting flare of anger when the machine broke. That hasty and uncontrolled response because the animal made a move that you didn't want it to make.

That self-defensive word that flew to the lips of your mouth. When you heard that someone made that word of criticism about something you said or did in the service. Or a devotion that you gave or something you said in the brother's meeting.

Where did that come from? It didn't come from a peaceful heart. It came from something else. And God wants that out of there.

Here I am, Lord. I have asked you to perfect, to control, and to use me. Is this your method then? Is this what you are doing then? Then, dear Father, I am patient.

And I await. With no resistance. With no fault-finding for others.

With no self-defense. With no self-preservation. Well, David.

David. Here's what every guy is saying about you, David. Listen, I'm going to take his head off.

Listen, let me cross that valley. I'll go over there to that dusty man that's throwing that poleball in the air. I'll take his head off.

No. If this is what God is doing, let God finish what he is doing. If we find grace inside of God, we'll cross the brook Kidron again.

And if it is not God's will, then we certainly don't want to fight against that man. Is that your attitude tonight? Do you have that in your heart? Do you find that resignation, that peace? In the face of the difficult circumstances that you're looking at as a congregation, looking at it as a brother in the family. Do you have that kind of heart? Do you have the heart of Joseph? And Joseph said unto them, Fear not, for I am the place of God.

But as for you, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring the past, and it is this day to save much people alive. Now therefore, fear ye not. I will nourish you and your little ones, and ye comfort them, and speak kindly unto them.

That's where he responds to the sufferings. For years in jail, in the bottom of the pit, 17 years of age, sold for 20 pieces of silver, sold into slavery, mocked by an Egyptian woman, lied about as she screamed to the men to come into the house. David was put and cast into the prison, and then forgotten about when he was hoping that somebody would speak to him, to Pharaoh.

And there Joseph was alienated from his parents, from his father at least. His mother had already died. There he was, in a foreign country, with a foreign language.

And there he was with no one to comfort him. And this is his response to that suffering. But the image of Christ was formed there.

Abraham. Abraham, rise up, take your son. Go to Mount Moriah.

Abraham built an altar. Abraham, offer your son up on that altar. Your only son.

Your only begotten son. Whom your soul loveth. Your son, Isaac.

Don't take Ishmael. Take Isaac. Take him up there.

Offer him for sacrifice. I want your son. Your father tonight, I want to tell you something.

That story in Genesis 22 is not the sacrifice of Isaac. That story is the sacrifice of Abraham. That's the first message that I preached in the Spanish language.

And ten days later, we dug a hole two meters deep and buried our second son. The whole thing is your sacrifice. The whole thing is to purify your life.

The whole thing is to melt that proud heart. The whole thing is to form that image of Christ in your life. The reason why the suffering is not over is because the work is still going on.

And we should be patient and repent of what we know to repent of. And humble ourselves as God can do it. And not resist his will.

And what is the end, then? What is the end, then, of taking that quiet and humble and broken position before the suffering that God allows? What is the end, then? Glory to God. The edification of the church. The salvation of sinners.

The restoration of broken relationships. The healing of the land. That is the end, then.

Let us bow our heads and pray. God in heaven, do not allow us to resist you. We have too long resisted.

We have too long fought. We have too long pointed fingers. We have too long blamed others.

We have too long accused the other group, accused the other congregation, accused the other family, accused the other partner in the business, accused the other partner in the marriage. We have been defensive. We have been self-confident.

We have demanded our own rights. We have said we will not put up with this anymore. We have said we're worthy of something better than this.

We have not humbled ourselves under your mighty hand. We know that you resist the proud and give grace to the humble. I pray, dear God, that you would help us to understand why we are suffering tonight.

I pray that you would cause us to count it all joy when we fall into these divers sufferings and temptations and losses. I pray, dear Father, that you would show us what you're doing in our lives. I pray, dear Father, that you would answer our prayers to perfect that which is lacking in our faith and lacking in our testimony.

I pray that you would revive us in our congregations, revive our marriages, revive our relationships with our children, dear God. If it takes more suffering to get that done, then dear God, in your mercy, deal with us in your mercy, oh Father. We are weak and you are strong.

We are weak children. You are so very strong. Be gentle in your dealing with us, oh God.

And in your mercy, dear Father, we pray that you would finish the holy work that you have started. May your will be done in our lives on earth as it is done in heaven. And when they ask whose image in superscription is that, may someone respond, it is the image of God.

Dear Father, would you stamp the image of God upon the Tangent congregation. Stamp the image of God upon these dear brothers and sisters, these youth in this church. Stamp the image of God upon those who are suffering tonight.

Be glorified in our congregations, be glorified in our families, be glorified in our marriages. Restore the broken homes and the broken hearts, oh God. You love us with everlasting love.

And we confess tonight that that most difficult trial and circumstance in our lives is the best shaped tool in your hand to form us into your holy image, oh Father. And do it with love and mercy. And we want you to finish it.

And we will be exercised thereby, and we will patiently endure, dear Father. Would you bless us who are suffering tonight, would you bless us who are gathered together here. Would you cause us to examine

what we should repent of, what we should change, what we should acknowledge, what we should see as our hindering you.

Would you show us what is standing in the way. Would you show us where we're resisting your love. Help us to humble ourselves and repent.

And seek your face. And turn from that way, so that you can heal the land. And we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. LiveSacrifice.com

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