**Transformed: 2 Corinthians wk 1 – You’re Not Alone**

**Going from A to B to C. Moving from here to there - What happens on the way shapes us… it makes us… good or bad.**

**The greatest event in a person’s life… Following Jesus - salvation**

* **Made right thru the grace of the cross of Jesus = Justification**

**But then - the HS begins to shape you and make you more like Jesus.**

* **A process that changes our mind, will, emotions, and habits**

**= sanctification (declared Holy – now be holy) The Clay**

**We like to think that we can shape the circumstances around us – but it is Jesus who uses our circumstances to shape us.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:3 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified…**

**One day the sanctified will stand before God and enter into the joy of God = glorification. Until then we grow to become like Him - The Pot**

**We pray – God, as I grow, make me more like you (not a god)!**

**Like a tree - God’s words are like seeds planted in us / If the soil of our heart is good – it will take root / As it grows it can be seen – that’s sanctification - As it grows stronger and stronger it produces fruit.**

**Using 2 Corinthians we are going to take a look at the sometimes-hard messy process of becoming more like Christ.**

**2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle (Messenger) of Christ Jesus by the will of God, (not a self-appointed apostle – not speaking of his own accord – I am speaking as an authority of Jesus) and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is at Corinth, with all the saints (Christians) who are in the whole of Achaia: (this letter is to be shared) 2Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**(map) Few churches in NT get more attention than Corinth. A large, popular, innovative, recreational and sexualized city – ancient Vegas. Many were radically saved – but were struggling to live like Jesus.**

**Paul planted a church & lived there 1 ½ yrs. Year later – He heard about issues, wrote 2 separate letters (1 Cor is 1), he later visited, but it didn’t turn out good – leaves frustrated - sends two follow up letters – the 2nd was 2 Cor. (We have 2 of 4)**

**NOW - writing from Macedonia (trying to find Titus) a year after his last visit – he is trying to make plans to come to visit them again.**

**\*\* 2 Corinthians is written as a part of an ongoing dialogue between Paul and the Christians in Corinth.**

**(Phone call) Imagine you’re listening to one side of a phone conversation. We must read between the lines.**

**In this letter Paul addresses travel plans, church discipline, suffering, and money issues - because local churches are, at any given moment, dealing with all of these. (Pretty much the topics of our elder meetings)**

**This is a real-life church letter, written to real people, dealing with real issues. As people of a real-life church dealing with real-life issues – we can learn a lot from it.**

**This week – God is making us more like him, through Trouble & Trials**

**2 Corinthians is supremely about God’s glory in the midst of suffering. God is shaping us through trouble.**

**I think the primary way we are shaped is right here – it makes us who we are – it defines our character, values, and heart…**

**2 Cor 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

**5For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.**

**8For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. 9Indeed, 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. 10He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 11You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.**

**Knowing the God of Comfort**

**1. Troubles and trials will come - 2 Cor 1:4 …in all our affliction…**

**Two types of trials – for a Christian**

* **Trials in life – daily life and dealing with a fallen world and people.**
* **Trials in Christ – persecution and isolation for following Jesus.**

**2 Cor deals with both – reality of life. It can be hard.**

**The issue is how do you find comfort and peace?**

**Many seek comfort in all the wrong places: relationships, career pursuits, money, buying possessions, have adrenaline experiences, drugs and alcohol. Trying to forget, distract, or fix.**

**2. Troubles and trials ensure our dependence (reliance) on Jesus**

**2 Cor 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our affliction…**

**Jesus Christ is our only source of comfort - “God of all comfort”**

**The word “father” – implies “source”**

**In moments of trials - we find the intimacy of our comforter. We’ll never discover the depth of God’s comfort, until we get in a place where we need God desperately.**

**1 Peter 1:6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith (of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire) may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

**A true child of God runs to God when the trouble comes. It exposes who are truly his kids. Trials reveal the depth of our reliance on Jesus – and the genuineness of our faith.**

**You might think " the devil is messing with me" - when sometimes it’s God sifting you. Trials have a way of sifting us and teaching us how to submit to God - They take us to a place - where we cry – I surrender all.**

**(Paul & Barnabas – encouraging the church after they were attached) Acts 14:22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said.**

**Trials have a way of teaching us obedience. God I don’t get it, but I will obey. I will trust in you. I will follow. I will not give up.**

**John 16:33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”**

**In Christ we have an anchor secure in the storms of life, but if we never sail into those storms, how would we know that?**

**2 Cor 1:4 (God) …who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**

**3. Troubles and trials equip us to help others**

**Troubles give us the experience to care and help others - they give us understanding of others pain – Creates empathy.**

**Luke 22:31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded (asked permission) to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, (I told him, “beat it, punk” and “stay away from him!) 32 but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”**

**On the other side of trials, we have different eyes for the hurting.**

**Sitting in the ICU waiting room 3 mths praying for my mother… Growing up without my Father in my life shaped me… Having cancer…**

**You know what happens? Your heart is enlarged.**

**My past has enabled me to have greater levels of grace, compassion, and patience. God has given me a gift to give – hope.**

**In this city – thousands are hungry, victimized, and need help - Many without knowledge of Jesus Christ – My hurt burns for them.**

**Examples – poverty, abuse, pregnancies, homeless, addictions…**

**2 Cor 1:5 …for as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.**

**4. Troubles and trials help us identify with Christ (Phil 1:29, 1 Pet 4:14-19)**

**Paul in chapter 11 – unpacks his list of trials – it’s a lot!**

**Trials remind us of the suffering of Jesus… the rejection – the cross – the burden – the pain – endured for the joy set before Him.**

**John 15 – people will hate you – that’s because people hate me – be ready.**

**Philippians 1:29 - For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him…**

**Paul, Peter & the early church counted it a blessing to experience trials in Christ name – it reminded them of what Christ did for them. Those persecuted today… do it in worship.**

**We understand the heart of God in suffering – not necessarily by escaping suffering.**

**2 Cor 1:6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. (NIV - which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer)**

**5. Troubles and trials build endurance, character, & confidence**

**Suffering produces patience and endurance**

**Understanding that a trial may be God moving you to a better place in Him – or a step to a greater good in you.**

**1 Peter 4:19 So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**

**James 1:3 ...that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. 4 Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.**

**Rom 5:3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.**

**Who we are becoming is more important than what we are doing.**

**If being a valley draws you closer to God and chisels your character for greater strength and maturity – where might he led you or allow you to be?**

**2 Cor 1:7 Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. (We are in this together)**

**6. Troubles and trials reveal and build true friendships**

**When you are going thru trials, you find out who is it with you.**

**It separates true friends from the good time acquaintances.**

**Maybe you've been there - those who actually had your back.**

**When we gather together on Sunday’s it is to be a type of refuge in the battle torn world filled with attacks and disappointments. For we know we are in this together – we stand together – we pray together.**

**(Paul then shares example of his current trial) 8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. (we don't exactly what it was - most likely persecution - a riot/mob broke out in Ephesus and was attacked) For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. (We thought we were going to die) 9 Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. (convinced it was the end) But (there was purpose in it – NIV “this happened so that…”) that was to make us rely not on ourselves (that is why so many have so much grief, they rely on their own efforts and the outcome of this life) but on God who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. (In this life or the next life)**

**7. Troubles and trials put the spotlight on the kingdom of heaven**

**That trial had moved them to put their reliance was on God alone – set them to look beyond the cars of this world – we will rise again!**

**Romans 8:18 - I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.**

**A day will come when God removes all suffering and judges all evil.**

**A day will come when God will make all things new.**

**Rev 21:4 He will remove all of their sorrows... there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain... the old world and its evils are gone forever.**

**Trials can produce deep hope - they remind us that this is not our home. We are travelers - foreigners - passing through.**

**8. Troubles and trials teach us the power of prayer**

**2 Cor 1:11 You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.**

**We are still in the middle of a trial – pray for us!**

**Tough time drive us to tough knees - drive us to our knees**

**They remind us that this life is out of our control – and that our best efforts don’t always go as planned or as expected.**

**But we can talk to the creator of all things who cares... Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.**

**His plan is perfect, His character is flawless, and those who trust Him will not be disappointed.**

**God - Make me more like you... are you sure? With that prayer will come trials and heart ache.**

**It's the same sun that makes wax melt and harden clay. The only difference is... how they respond to the heat. What will you be... wax or clay... in the potter’s hand?**